

**BOY-WORK**  
**EXPLOITATION OR**  
**TRAINING? By the**  
**REV. SPENCER J. GIBB**

---

ND

2160

ND

THE  
CHARLES MYERS  
LIBRARY

Reference  
Section

NATIONAL INSTITUTE  
OF  
INDUSTRIAL  
PSYCHOLOGY

ND

ND



22500414655



Med  
K46585

S.M. Bowling for.

14.8.29.

R

UF

+

HPA

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL PSYCHOLOGY.



22500308342



# BOY-WORK

## THE TRAINING OF YOUTH

A Treatise on the Training of Adolescents. By T. W. BERRY, Director of Education, Rhondda. Crown 8vo, cloth, 7s. net.

This book has been written in the spirit of the times recognizing that the youth of the nation must now occupy an increasingly important position in the national reconstruction schemes as a result of the war-depletion of the nation's manhood. Recreations—principles and outlets, indoor and outdoor; play centres for juveniles; conduct and habits; juvenile delinquency; vocational training; and employment are all sympathetically and practically dealt with. A chapter on moral virility is specially opportune. The subjects have been approached from a psychological standpoint and with a view of ascertaining how to get hold of our youth through an improvement in the educational facilities—social and moral. Blind-alley occupations, unemployment, unskilled labour, moral depravity, social disability, physical degeneracy, are subjects for preventive treatment at which the book aims.

T. FISHER UNWIN LTD., LONDON, W.C.



# BOY - WORK

EXPLOITATION OR TRAINING?

BY THE  
REV. SPENCER J. GIBB

LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN LTD.  
ADELPHI TERRACE

1919

3 662 962

*First published in 1919*

WELLCOME INSTITUTE LIBRARY	
Coll.	WeIMOmec
Coll.	
No.	WS

UF

o

HPA

*(All rights reserved)*



# CONTENTS

## CHAPTER I

	PAGE
THE PROBLEM . . . . .	7

## CHAPTER II

THE BOY . . . . .	23
-------------------	----

## CHAPTER III

THE WORK . . . . .	43
--------------------	----

## CHAPTER IV

THE CHOICE OF WORK . . . . .	95
------------------------------	----

## CHAPTER V

THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL . . . . .	138
---------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VI

THE CONTINUATION SCHOOL . . . . .	161
-----------------------------------	-----

## CHAPTER VII

THE REFORM OF BOY-WORK . . . . .	193
----------------------------------	-----

CONCLUSION . . . . .	218
----------------------	-----





# BOY-WORK

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

#### I

FOR some years before the outbreak of the war the social and economic problems of boy-work had challenged attention. The Reports of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws (1909) pronounced on an overwhelming mass of evidence that a large amount of unemployment, unemployability and poverty was to be directly traced to the carelessness with which boys, on leaving school, were launched upon boyish occupations, which often affording high wages while they lasted, were without training, permanence or definite prospect. From these "blind-alleys," as they came to be called, youths were thrown, between the ages of sixteen

and eighteen, upon the labour market. Unequipped for any form of skilled work, industrially crippled, and sometimes personally demoralized, they became in many cases chronically unemployed, or intermittently employed. It was found that nearly one out of every three qualified applicants for assistance to "Distress Committees" was under thirty. A large proportion of these young men could already be classed as "chronic cases." They were, in fact, unemployable; and in many cases the main cause of their plight was the absence of training and permanence in the work they had taken up as boys. Tens of thousands of boys, in the emphatic, but strictly accurate, words of the Minority of the Poor Law Commission, "through neglect to provide them with suitable industrial training," might be said "to graduate into unemployment as a matter of course." Nor was the evil confined to the frankly unpromising "blind-alleys." Changes in industrial method, and in the mode by which boys were recruited for industry, carried the problem into the skilled manual trades. The menace of future unemployment, and even future unemploy-

permanence  
of the few



ability, with its poverty and waste, threatened the whole area of boy-work.

The revelations of the Poor Law Commission awakened public attention with a start to the economic dangers of boy-work. The subject was widely discussed in reports, books and pamphlets. It became a commonplace. Further investigation confirmed the waste of boy-life in unprogressive employment which the Commission had brought to light. But such efforts as were made to solve the problem were fugitive and loosely co-ordinated. There was no synthesis in reform. Symptoms were doctored with specifics, while the disease of which they were symptomatic was left uncured, and even undiagnosed, and at the outbreak of the war the position remained substantially what the Reports of the Poor Law Commission had shown it to be five years before.


64 5/10  
7/0.8

The dislocation of industry and commerce caused by the war has accentuated and extended these problems of boy-work. The first effect of the war upon juvenile labour was to disturb the equilibrium of distribution. Boys were diverted from one class of work into another. The munition

industries created a large temporary demand for juvenile workers in the automatic and semi-automatic processes of engineering. This work demanded no training, and imparted none—or at least none of lasting value. It yielded earnings so high as to attract boys from the blind-alley occupations, whose lure had previously been the large earnings they offered: and for the same reason many boys entered upon manual labour who, in normal times, would have sought employment in other kinds of work. In such regular and normal work as continued—in clerical employment, for example—the supply of boy-workers, diverted by war-work, was not enough, without stimulus, to meet the demand; and in consequence of this (as well as of the increased cost of living) the wage-value of boy-work became high. In some cases girls superseded boys: in others they competed with them. The absence of men on service led also to the assignment to boys of work of greater difficulty and responsibility than before; and boy-work tended, both in kind and remuneration, to approximate more closely to that of men.

The result of these changes, anticipated

with great accuracy and acuteness in the Report of the Ministry of Reconstruction on "Juvenile Employment During the War and After," is now unhappily apparent. The closing of the munition works has thrown thousands of boys into unemployment, at an awkward age and in a time of peculiar difficulty. Without skill or training, save in the "repetition" work upon which they were for the most part engaged, and which was minutely specialized for needs that have ceased to exist, their re-absorption into industry, as it makes transition from war to peace conditions, is difficult. They are joined in the congested labour market by many boys who, in other occupations, have been temporarily employed to replace men on service. The uncertainty of trade prospects keeps staffs depleted. At the same time demobilization returns to civilian life men many of whom, engaged upon casual work as boys four or five years ago, are unequipped for skilled employment, and are therefore brought into direct competition with boys for work. The surplus of unemployed boy-labour stimulates the demand for boy-workers in the distinctive blind-alley occupations,





which, denuded of candidates during the war, are gradually recruiting them again. Boys will enter these disastrous occupations at a later age than formerly, and their helplessness when they are dismissed from them at the dawn of manhood will be greater than before. It is uncertain how far in many occupations the competition of girls with boys, or the substitution of girls for boys, will become a permanent factor in the problem. The keenness of the competition for openings narrows the choice of employment for boys leaving school; and many of them in consequence will fall into unprogressive work. The problem is not only sharpened, but threatens to be perpetuated.

But, while these problems have been intensified and extended by the war, and assume a more formidable menace in the transition from war to peace, they have neither been created, nor in their essence changed, by the war. They are indigenous to the modern working world; and are bound up with traditions of engagement and employment which have become habitual through many years. They cannot be solved, but can only at most be salved, by emergency

measures designed to meet the acute difficulties of the immediate position. Rather, the urgency of the present need should be made the stimulus and the occasion to remedy, by considered, deep-reaching, and co-ordinated reform, the evils to which the problem of boy-work as a whole gives rise. Clearly the first step in this direction is to appreciate the problem as it shows itself under normal conditions and to diagnose its causes. Such is the main purpose of this book. It aims, first, at stating the terms of the problem and at illustrating it in its normal incidence; second, at examining the means of solution either at present available or proposed; third, at drawing together these proposals in such a way as to sketch, coherently if not completely, the lines of reform, or rather (since nothing less is needed) of reconstruction, which the solution demands.

## II

The problem of boy-work, as the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws stated it, was mainly a problem of economics. The

*Dec 1909*  
V danger was the steady manufacture of adult unemployment and unemployability by means of entrance in boyhood upon uneducative and fugitive work. This aspect of the problem has since been almost exclusively discussed; and while it has not been exaggerated in scope or seriousness, it has often been disproportionately emphasized. For, central and vital as this economic aspect is, it is not the whole problem. Hasty entrance upon work, absence of training, and precarious prospect result not only in industrial disablement, but in personal deterioration. The two consequences interact. The very features in his work which tend to make a boy industrially incompetent and unadaptable—its temporary character, unprogressiveness and aimlessness—also, while he is yet engaged upon it, corrode his character, numb his mental alertness, and sometimes impair his physical health. At the age, therefore, at which the economic problem becomes acute, he has lost the keenness, adaptability, initiative, which might have enabled him, if not to retrieve the waste of his earlier years, at least to make the best of the opportunities that remain. The problem, seen whole, is

not a problem only of juvenile industry :  
*it is a problem of the boy in industry.*

When a boy leaves the elementary school and goes to work, work becomes at once the dominant influence on his whole life. It overbalances the influences of his leisure, influences of home, Church, Club, Brigade, or Scout Troop. It is the one *compulsory* influence which survives the passing of the compulsion of school. His physical, mental and moral life is brought, for better or for worse, under pressure of his daily work. When his body, mind, and character are most plastic they are formed, or deformed, by the labour to which he goes. What his labour makes him, that he is in his leisure. The task, therefore, of those who would understand the conditions of boy-labour is to analyse not only the elements in it which produce the unemployed or unemployable, but the elements also which influence, well or ill, the whole life of the boy-worker. The aim of reform is not only to conserve industrial efficiency and to eliminate industrial waste : more widely, it is to conserve the boy-life of the nation, and to eliminate vital waste,

Life & today



It will be convenient to postpone discussion of the reaction of his industrial life upon a boy to a later chapter. But the conception of the problem, and the interrelation of its parts, may be made clearer by observing here that, just as the problem of boy-labour on its economic side centres in the lack of prospect in much juvenile work—in its failure to train and equip—so does the influence of work upon the boy take its most distinctive character from the degree to which it does, or does not, enable him to look forward to a settled adult position. The pursuit of an aim, desired and foreseen, is the essential condition of the discipline of character, which cannot be imposed from without, but must grow up within. Aimless work, or work followed merely for a weekly wage—work without vista or ambition—is a disastrous influence upon the life of a boy. It asphyxiates his soul. In the space of a few years, it converts the alert schoolboy into an industrial cripple and an aimless youth. And if one considers the physical effects of boy-work it is found also that, broadly speaking, the kinds of work which, being destitute of training and prospect, are economically the

most disabling, are also those in which conditions are worst and overwork most rife, because they are often forms of work upon which the law imposes no restriction. While, therefore, what we have called the economic aspect of the boy-labour problem has been perhaps disproportionately emphasized, it is yet the central factor in the problem. Most of the other dangers of boy-work radiate from it.

### III

Various causes conspire to produce the problem of boy-labour. The methods of industry have been for many years changing. Specialization has cut up trades into departments, and departments into processes, dovetailing in the completed product, but hardly consciously related in the work of the men engaged upon them. Machinery has superseded handicraft, and created the demand for machine-minders rather than craftsmen. Labourers, without even the machine-minders' skill, are employed precariously. Such industrial changes render the older system of apprenticeship obsolete; and the clear line

which could once be drawn between skilled and unskilled work becomes indistinct. If apprenticeship is not dead, it is certainly dying. It is dying because it has ceased to be adaptable to its environment. Older industrial methods to which it was applicable have passed, or are passing, away. No system of entrance upon industry has come to take its place. The entrance of boys upon work is accordingly haphazard and aimless. The uncertainty of training and prospect in manual trades sets their advantages in less decided relief against the highly paid "blind-alleys," which everywhere invite candidates and some of which appear, at any rate at the first glance, as necessary as the trades themselves.

Outside the manual trades there is no system of entrance and training to outgrow, since entrance and training have never been systematic; and casual engagement was and is the common practice. Consequently, these occupations, even when they are in their nature probationary and offer prospect, are seldom entered with deliberate purpose and aim. The decay of apprenticeship within the manual trades, and the practice of haphazard entrance into other kinds of work,

1. *clerical  
work*

fall in with the natural carelessness of the boy and his vagueness of destination in embarking upon the working world: encourage him to find a "job" and not to seek a vocation. Parental ignorance, or parental acquiescence in the valuation of a "place" mainly on the basis of the wage-price paid for the boy's labour, conspire with these other causes to launch the boy lightly and aimlessly upon the journey of his life.

But the root cause of the problem lies deeper. It is to be sought in a false conception of the position and value of the boy-worker; and this false conception has arisen, not so much from the supersession of apprenticeship as a system as from the practical repudiation of the principle which vitalized apprenticeship in days gone by. The principle was that the boy in the earliest years of his working life was in the position of a pupil. His business was not to work, but to learn to work. He was not an instrument of production, or a convenience of commerce: he was himself the commodity that was being perfected. That which was going forward was the making of a craftsman. His 'prentice hand might spoil material, or,

*Post-  
script*

*False  
conception*



again, his tentative labour might contribute to the work, but the waste was not counted loss, or the successful piece of work the most valued gain. The value of the apprentice to himself, to his parents, to his master, and to the community was not in the present but in the future. It lay, not in what he was doing, but in what he was becoming. In modern times this principle has been renounced. It has been reversed. Boys are not trained for the future, but made use of in the present, or, at any rate, their training is made subservient to their immediate serviceableness to their employer or to the public. To the parent the boy is a wage-earner: to the employer "a hand." To the boy himself his work is a more or less congenial means of adding his quota to the family exchequer, and of receiving in acknowledgement his weekly "spends" and his increasing independence. Exploitation, in fine, has taken the place of training. The word "exploitation" is not of necessity used in a sinister sense. It is used merely to express the conception of juvenile labour at the present day in contrast with its conception in the days of apprenticeship. The position

was expressed with a blunt conciseness by an employer whose words are quoted by Mr. R. H. Tawney in a Memorandum to the Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools (1908). "Boys," he said, "are not taught: they are made to work." He was speaking of engineering; but the words are true of all employments into which boys enter.

Every evil of boy-work as we know it flows from this perverted conception of the boy-worker. His work is valued on a false standard—the standard of the present wage. Choosing employment means nothing more difficult than selection of the most lucrative job. The future is mortgaged to the present, and the morrow is quite literally left to take thought for the things of itself. Considerations of training and prospect, if not deemed to be irrelevant, are secondary. The wage-valuation of work, together with absence of coherent plan, sets the boy roaming from "place" to "place," if only there is promise of slightly more money. On the other hand, the hardest, the most tiring and the most unhealthy conditions are stoically endured if "the money is all right." From the same

cause comes the serious overworking of lads in many occupations ; for the employer has made only a money bargain for the boy's work, and he demands his money's worth. And hence, too, comes that general demoralization which cannot but follow the pursuit of work entered upon without aim or ambition, and with no higher incentive than the few shillings a week that are paid for it.

## CHAPTER II

### THE BOY

#### I

THE age of fourteen at which the boy enters upon work marks the beginning of the most critical period of his life. Physically, mentally, and morally during the succeeding years he passes through a crisis of change. Acceleration of growth lays strain upon his bodily powers. The relative stability of later childhood—roughly from the age of eight to the age of twelve—is disturbed; and about the age of fourteen there is considerable increase in height. The machinery of the body is thrown out of gear; for growth does not advance with balance and equipoise. “The growing organs,” writes Dr. Slaughter, “show relations to each other of a kind almost to make one favour the belief of Roux that there is in the body



a struggle for existence in which the organs compete for the food supply in a manner comparable to that found in natural selection. The consequence is that at one time one organ and then another organ overcomes the others, and by a temporary monopoly of the food supply has its period of rapid growth.”<sup>1</sup> The effect is open to observation. The command of limb, the ready correlation of will and activity, which makes the boy of twelve an efficient young animal, sturdy, self-controlled and resilient, gives place to the ungainliness of the hobbledehoy. Physical growth absorbs the reserves of strength. Expenditure of energy is relatively more costly than it was in the earlier period, or will be when growth is complete. The boy in early youth is peculiarly susceptible to fatigue and overstrain, and their effects are serious and may be permanent. His frame, plastic for the necessary changes of his age, is plastic also to the disablement and contortion of labour which lays undue burden on bones, muscles, and nerves. He cannot with impunity work to the full limit of his strength. By so doing he draws on the reserves

<sup>1</sup> *The Adolescent*, p. 18.

of vital energy which nature needs for the work of building. The inevitable result is arrest of growth, disproportionate growth, or deformity. The danger is the more insidious because the boy's restless activity, and his desire to keep step with older companions, urge him to overstrain, and cloak the effects of it. Physically, therefore, at the age of entering industry he needs a jealous guardianship against overwork; and overwork is to be interpreted, not in relation to the strength which he is able or willing to expend, but in relation to the strength which he can spare from growth.

The physiological changes associated with the development of sexual character, evidenced by the "break" in the voice and the appearance of hair upon the face, are dynamic, stimulating growth as a whole: they react profoundly upon the bodily and mental changes of adolescence, and complicate the delicacy and disintegration of this period. Physical growth, and the demands which it makes on strength, cannot be measured alone by the increase in stature and weight, or by other visible changes. Nor can fatigue be accurately diagnosed by the aching of

muscles, or by sensations which we associate with "feeling tired." These are symptomatic. The seat of fatigue is in the nervous system. Habituation to work which is too exacting or too heavy will deaden the acuteness of the symptoms; and the presence of harmful fatigue may be discoverable only by physiological tests. A boy engaged upon fatiguing work, or working for over-long hours, is at first acutely sensible of being tired. He suffers pain from the muscles that are called into play, and feels jaded and good for nothing. But, after a time, exercise of the affected muscles enables them to work without discomfort, and the symptoms become numbed. The boy, as he says, "gets used to it," and the process is encouraged by his elasticity, resilience and pluck. But what in fact he is "getting used to" may be a condition of chronic overstrain. The lessening sense of fatigue conceals the reality of injury, and removes a valuable safeguard. If the boy feels that his day's work has "taken it out of him," he will seek in his leisure the rest which nature demands. But if he is not acutely conscious of fatigue, his eagerness to invest his spare time at the largest obtain-

able interest will tempt him to an over-strenuous leisure.

That insensibility to fatigue through habituation is delusive is apparent if we note an experience which seems at first sight to contradict what has just been said. A boy of fourteen, starting upon work, will often show a stouter resistance to fatigue than a lad two years older working under the same conditions. The capacity of the younger boy for recovery and endurance may seem to be almost unlimited. The older boy, in attitude, bearing, physical and nervous signs of fatigue, will strongly exhibit the reaction upon him of the very conditions which appear so slightly to influence his younger comrade. This is especially the case in work which, without making large demand on strength or thought, is wearing by reason of long hours of standing or walking, and is monotonous and uninteresting. A typical example is that of page-boys employed in hotels or restaurants. The explanation is simple, but significant. Fatigue is cumulative. The boy entering upon work has not yet drawn upon his reserves of strength and nervous energy; and for a time the calling up of these reinforcements to meet the



daily strain does not perceptibly impoverish the supply. Novelty, too, gives stimulus. Zest in the new life prevents the weight of monotony from being felt. Growth, perhaps, has not yet reached its greatest velocity; and there is not so sharp a competition as later arises between work and growth for the vital resources. The older boy, on the other hand, is assailed at once by the accumulated forces of fatigue, by lassitude, and by the insistent demands of growth. His resistance weakens or breaks down. He works under pressure of weariness, and the strongholds of health are sapped.

It will be clear that the physical reaction of working conditions upon a growing boy is extremely difficult to measure. It is indefinitely variable according to industrial differences—rapidity or tardiness of growth, robustness or delicacy, tranquillity or excitability of temperament, and the like. It cannot be measured by the demands it makes on strength. Many kinds of work which are most fatiguing, and in their physical effects most injurious, are not the heaviest. The injury which they produce comes from their relative passivity—from long hours of standing,

from cramped or unnatural postures of body, from the constant repetition of actions engaging a single series of muscles. Actual working conditions, too, will be modified in their reaction upon a boy by other circumstances not industrial—by adequacy of meal times, for example, or the distance from home of the place of work, and the available means of transit. Nor can working conditions be considered without reference to the influences of home, leisure and habit of living. One of the Medical Inspectors employed by the Health of Munition Workers Committee, reporting on the boys in a certain factory, wrote :—

Of the boys it may be said for the most part that they are so spiritless, so dull, so dead in look, so woebegone and attacked with weariness to a dulling of their spirits, as to compel attention. These conditions are attributable to a very large measure to the conditions outside the workshop, many of them going to bed very late, due to a want of proper parental control.

And speaking by contrast of the boys in another factory where, although hours were long, conditions outside the factory were good, he writes :—

The nervous system shows its response to good conditions and to reasonable hours in the very large percentage of boys who feel perfectly fit on rising, though most of them are out of bed never later than 5.15 a.m., some of them even starting for their work at or before 5 a.m., but always fortified with food before doing so. It is all important to remember that the homes from which these boys come are, though small, in every case well situated; that is to say, there are no squalid courts, no back-to-back houses, no sordid areas as in most industrial towns. . . . These boys are an example of what juvenile workers under proper conditions can be. About fifty per cent. of them are engaged for more than sixty hours per week, and yet find time and are sufficiently fresh at the end of the day to cycle, to act as golf caddies, to swim, to boat, or to pass the time playing football, or enjoying other healthy recreations.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast serves to illustrate the inter-relation between general and working conditions. It may, however, lead to mistake. Resilience and recovery from fatigue are naturally strongest in boys living under healthy conditions. But the fact that such boys, released from work, retain energy to cycle, swim, play football, and the rest, does not prove that their labour has not absorbed

<sup>1</sup> Health of Munition Workers Committee. Memorandum No. 3. *Juvenile Employment*. Cd. 8362. 1916.

more vital force than healthy development can spare. A boy is prodigal of energy. This is natural to his time of life, and should therefore be taken into account in controlling the amount and severity of work to which he is put. The whole question of industrial fatigue, indeed, on which, generally, valuable Reports have been issued by the Ministry of Munitions, needs to be studied on the same scientific method in relation to the physical condition of youth and the physical demands of work.

## II

Mentally and morally, no less than physically, the boy on the threshold of youth is changing. One may perhaps distinguish the mental life of the child from the mental life of the youth by saying that childhood is the time of *quest*, and youth the time of *questioning*. To the child the world is a spectacle: to the youth it becomes an enigma. The mental activity of the child is observation and memory. The questions that he asks relate to the nature of things and their uses rather than to their cause and connection.

The impressions that are made are clear-cut and unblurred just because they are relatively unmodified by reflection. Teaching can be received on authority, because reason has hardly awakened to criticize and probe. It is the same in the moral sphere. The morality of a child is obedience. He does what he is told, because he is told to do it. He can be governed by the acknowledged despotism of parent or teacher, and his life can be fenced with rules.

This unquestioning subjection to bare authority gradually gives way in youth before a growing assertion of criticism and choice. Observation is coloured by reflection, comparison and judgment. The child had examined the world: the youth cross-examines it. The treasure chest of memory is opened, and its contents are classified and appraised. With the awakening of the critical faculty awakes the moral sense. The boy begins to perceive that what is called right conduct has an inherent justification, and not merely an arbitrary authority. His moral valuations may be crude. He believes in the existence of unmitigated villains and flawless heroes. He admits no extenuating circumstances. But



his judgments are no longer the child's unquestioning assent to what he is told: they are his own, or at any rate they represent his own ratification of the moral code which has been set before him. This awakening of judgment makes him censorious. Illusions are destroyed. Many people prove to be not as good as he thought them to be. He values consistency as the central virtue: and the inconsistency and moral compromise which mar the symmetry of human character seem to him sheer hypocrisy. He may become sceptical and suspicious. He has been imposed upon, and he thinks that he has become too shrewd to be imposed upon again. Persons placed in official positions of moral authority—clergy, Sunday School teachers, and the like—retain their ascendancy only so long as they satisfy his moral judgment. Thus he is often singularly lonely in the fight for pure and honest living in which, with this alertness of the moral sense, he finds himself engaged.

*Reddell*

For the youth becomes intensely self-conscious. His thought and judgment are turned inwards. He looks into the mystery of himself. Forces of which he knows nothing

—the birth-pangs of sexual potentiality—stir and stimulate with a movement new and irresistible to desires which lie on the borderland of good and evil. Impulses and appetites, he knows not whence, lure into what he feels rather than knows is sin. He grapples for anchorage in waters that seem bottomless. And in this, as we say, owing to the critical faculty which makes him probe within, he is often alone. His shyness in the abashed contemplation of himself forbids him to seek counsellors. He may become morbid, fancying himself guilty of dark disgraces.

From this acute self-consciousness spring those familiar phenomena of youth which provide some of the most baffling problems of psychology. The restlessness and instability, the alternation of rollicking mischief and wistful pondering, the “gleams and glooms,” the emotional crises, the “storm and stress,” the impulsive expansiveness and again the guarded reticence, give sign of the tumult within. Reflection and experience are coalescing. There is impatience of control, defiance of authority. The lad becomes stolidly obstinate, or aggressively self-assertive. He resents advice, and will not brook dictation.

Perhaps he turns away from the comrades of his earlier years and identifies himself with new "sets." He is little at home, and likes to keep late hours, because they *are* late hours: and to be abroad at unwonted times piques his sense of independence. All this is normal. It is the challenge of individuality, the personal response to the call of life.

For the youth looks again from within outwards, and seeks to relate himself to the world in which he lives. Vividly conscious of himself, yet profoundly ignorant of himself, he asks as to his place and lot in the years that open before him. He looks up and sees those years as an immensely long and spacious avenue, the end of which is out of sight. Somehow and somewhither he is to walk along it. Ambition awakes. Its intensity, level and direction vary, of course, according to his temperament and imagination. It is conditioned by his circumstances, social position, and the possibilities of his lot. It may sometimes be content to be walled in by the barrier of the average life lived by his parents and companions, or it may proudly, and perhaps extravagantly,

dream of over-leaping this barrier. The ambition of the average working lad does not normally aspire fancifully. A certain matter-of-fact-ness, bred in him by his home life and upbringing, a sense of humour and the fear of being laughed at for a fool, a tendency, strong in all but the unusual, to conform to type, keep it to the beaten track. But the constant fact, often obscured in the working lad, is that ambition of some sort comes to birth. Whether, though lowly, it looks to some place in the world to be won by patient effort, and worth the winning, or does not look beyond the coming week, matters supremely; for his ambition may give both the steadying and driving force of which he stands in need.

### III.

But at the age of fourteen—the age of entrance upon work—the self-consciousness of youth, its introspection and its ambitious quest, have not as a rule begun. The boy of fourteen has lost the peculiar seriousness of childhood—the seriousness of wondering exploration, the gravity of rejoicing play—

and has not yet won the more passionate seriousness of youth. He is at the age of least responsibility. The desire for novelty, and especially for the novelty of playing at being a man, engrosses him. Such novelty, and the acting of a grown-up part, the working world offers him; and it is all he asks or cares for. He takes what comes with a frolic welcome; and leaps, light-hearted, into the big world. Advice as to the future passes him by. The future does not interest him. He lives from day to day. The awakening of self-consciousness and the birth of ambition find the boy already at work. Ambition opens his eyes to the value of prospect. The future, unimportant to him in the excitement of taking a new departure in life, becomes all at once the most impressive consideration. Novelty has lost its edge. The pressure of work, in those circumstances of it which may be hard and fatiguing, exhausts the lad as he grows, frets and frays his nerves. It is then that he asks the questions which his advisers vainly suggested to him a couple of years before. "Where am I going?" he asks. "What will my work lead me to?" "Will it lead me anywhere, and if it will

*17 pages*



not, what about my future?" The answers found to these questions, and the action taken upon them, matter immensely both economically and personally. Economically, the questions may arise too late. Before asking them, before reaching the clearer outlook which prompts him to ask them, the boy may have already continued in uneducative and unpromising employment until he has reached an age at which he cannot successfully enter upon probationary work. At sixteen a boy is already too old to begin as a learner in most of the skilled trades; and sixteen or thereabouts is normally the age at which comes the awakening of ambition and the consequent questioning as to prospect. Suppose a boy of this age awaking to the fact that his work offers no scope to ambition, and see how inevitably, according to his temperament, he will exhibit one or other of several kinds of behaviour which have often been noticed without being explained in discussions on the boy and his work. He will at once grow dissatisfied with what he is doing. Conditions in his work which are distasteful, but which so far he has stoically endured, will, with the new sense that his

labour is purposeless, become insufferable. Impelled by this double discontent, he will throw up his employment in some crisis of disgust. But, almost certainly, he has taken neither time nor pains, and most likely has not the means, to plan a way of escape into more promising work. Even with expert advice, this transition from one employment to another is a precarious business. The ordinary roads of probationary work are barred by the lad's age. He must discriminate between the most promising of the remaining openings. There is no time to waste. His chances of retrieving the mistake of his hasty plunge into work recede with every day that passes. If a second false step is taken, the step is irretrievable.

As a matter of fact, the lad, consciously caught in a blind-alley, seldom seeks advice. Immature self-reliance suggests to him vocational experiments of his own devising. What he actually does depends upon his temperament, the necessities of the moment, or upon sheer chance. His hasty pique with his former work has thrown him out of employment. Another "job" is the immediate requisite. He does not like being out of work. Time hangs

heavy on his hands. He is bereft of "spends." His parents are displeased probably, and unsympathetic; and he is eyed askance. A hasty glance at the promising occupations assures him that he is either too late to enter them, or, if he does, that he must begin at the foot of the ladder with the wages of a "kid." The idea of prospect recedes into the background. Ambition, checked in that direction, falls upon the aim of winning a little more money than he earned in his last "place." He finds such a place, with or without promise, security or training, and he considers that he has "bettered" himself. Therein he either remains drudging; or he begins a restless and purposeless migration from job to job.

With a boy of another temperament—slower, more apathetic, or less adventurous—the recognition that his work has no future will produce a different result. He will simply capitulate to the force of circumstances. Remaining where he is, he will make no effort to better himself even financially; and when at last his work fails him, and he is dismissed on account of age, he will nervelessly fall into whatever other occupation presents itself.

A boy of such lethargic habit is often roundly abused for lack of enterprise, or laziness or stupidity. The condemnation is often unjust. He is certainly less vivacious and volatile than the boy who roves from job to job. But the qualities which are now condemned were once approved. He was considered to possess steadiness and stamina; and was praised for settling down so dutifully to work. He was a plodder, and was credited with common sense. These qualities were in fact admirable. The lethargy, heaviness, loutishness which descend upon him like a cloud represent the perversion of these qualities through the circumstances of his daily work.

S. 10

Thus the psychology of youth ministers to the economic perils of boy-labour. The restlessness, changefulness, and roving of working boys, or their dullness and listlessness, have filled reformers with despair as incalculable factors introduced into the problem. They are not incalculable, and they are inevitable. They are the natural reaction of aimless, unpromising or unfit work upon the lad at the time when, in the normal progress of his development, he looks for a goal to be striven for and won. That this is true is apparent

P. 57

from observing in contrast the influence upon a boy at the same stage of development of work in which conditions are good and prospect assured. Ambition, awaking, finds outlet in what he is doing. He braces himself to it with seriousness and intention. The vivacity of the lighter spirited boy is steadied, and the stolidity of the duller boy is rescued from inertness.



## CHAPTER III

### THE WORK

#### I

THE older industrial order used, at any rate within the trades, simple and uniform methods of work, and adopted a regular system of entrance, training and promotion. In the working world of to-day there is no such simplicity and uniformity. Readjustment and adaptation are going on; and there is the crumbling and patching, the improvisation and experiment incidental to changing conditions. A clean-cut classification of boy-labour is in these circumstances impossible, and the attempt strictly to tabulate it leads only to mistake. The working world into which the boy enters cannot be finally charted. Even if one takes the broadest classification, and sets "Probationary Employment" in one

category, and "Blind-Alley Work" in another, as is commonly done, it is found that these categories overlap. Characteristics of one class of work appear in the other. Yet, misleading if taken as the names of walled compartments, these terms are useful; for they express a vital distinction between kinds of work upon which boys enter. The distinction needs, however, to be precisely defined.

The essence of the distinction is in the prospect or lack of prospect in the two classes of employment; but the term "prospect" itself, often loosely used, needs definition. In probationary work a boy's prospects of adult employment are not only assured, but determinable. He knows not only that he has prospects, but he knows also what they are. If, for instance, he enters, under whatever form of agreement, as a fitter's apprentice in an engineering works, the prospect before him is that of becoming a fitter, and winning a fitter's wage; and the achievement of becoming a fitter is being approached during the whole of his probation and in all that he does in the engineering shop. His first work puts his foot on the bottom rung of the ladder

at the top of which he will stand when he is out of his time. He is not doing one kind of work as a boy and hoping to do another kind of work as a man: he is engaged in boyhood upon the elementary processes of the work which he will be doing completely at manhood. Prospect in probationary work is progressive ascent to an end foreseen from the start.

In "blind-alley" occupations, on the other hand, there is no such organic and continuous connection between the earlier and later work. Contingent prospect of some kind there may be. It is not always the case that a boy entering a blind-alley is simply dismissed from employment in early youth. In fact, this often happens: but the abrupt termination of engagement is not a necessary condition of blind-alley work. The blind-alley worker may attain promotion—to *something*. But his "prospects" differ from those of the boy in probationary work, not only because they are precarious, but because, if he be retained and promoted, he enters upon work of a different kind from that which he has done as a boy, and for which, therefore, his boyhood work has not been a preparation. A

boy, for instance—to illustrate by a familiar example—becomes a telegraph messenger. Under the revised Post Office scheme he will probably not be cast into unemployment. He may win some appointment in the postal service. He may become a sorting clerk or a telegraphist. At the worst he may become a postman. But for the work to which he is promoted his messenger work has in no sense prepared him. His messenger work in itself has led to nothing. His ability to do the work of a sorter or a telegraphist or a postman has not been improved, or at all affected, by it. He begins anew. The only connection between the work of his boyhood and the work of his manhood is that both are forms, though unrelated forms, of Post Office service. In a blind-alley there may be prospect of reaching *some* position: in probationary work there is prospect of reaching *one* position.

A further distinction between probationary and blind-alley work follows from this distinction in prospect. All probationary work involves training. The training may be adequate or inadequate, deliberately given or merely “picked up”; but training is needed

for the work for which the boy is preparing. The very fact that from the beginning he is engaged upon the rudiments of the work which he will do as a man implies this. But the work to which the blind-alley worker may perhaps be promoted, being distinct from his earlier work, can find no training in it. And further, the distinction between "skilled" and "unskilled" work is not always easy of definition. No work perhaps is wholly unskilled. A certain skill is involved in the manner in which a postman arranges his letters for delivery, or a waiter carries a number of dishes. But the "skill" demanded in blind-alley work itself, and in that to which the blind-alley worker attains, if he is promoted at all, is always slight and easily acquired. In consequence, whether a particular kind of work partakes more of the nature of probationary employment or more of the nature of a blind-alley may usually be decided by examining the degree of skill and training required for its performance.

Even with these distinctions in mind, however, it is in many cases difficult to decide whether a particular occupation should be classed under the heading of "Probationary



Work.” The manual trades, in spite of some uncertainty in prospect, naturally take their place in this division. So, notwithstanding the absence of systematic promotion, does work in offices or in wholesale warehouses. There are also kinds of employment—of which railway work is a good example—in which an established tradition of advancement gives probationary character to labour which is unskilled, or low-skilled, and for which training is won merely by practical experience. On the other hand, again, there are forms of work, such as that in the retail trades, in which, though they possess opportunities of promotion and prospect, these possibilities have been neglected. Finally, the pure blind-alley occupations stand in conspicuous isolation from probationary work, and, in spite of their variety, fall into a clearly distinguishable class. Examination of some typical examples will best illustrate the tendency of modern industry in its use of boy-labour.

## II

1. The manual trades roughly subdivide into such as are carried on in works and factories

—engineering, for instance, or the textile industries, and into such as are practised more privately and occasionally—of which plumbing is an example. This distinction is not a wholly artificial one. The practice of a trade on a large scale in a factory naturally gives more scope to specialization and to the substitution of mechanical processes for handicraft than exists in trades whose operations are on a smaller scale. But changes which are vitally altering the status of manual work, and especially the entrance into it, are in greater or less degree universal. We shall gain the clearest understanding of these changes by considering them where they are most influential—in the factory trades, and conspicuously in engineering.

It is as a method of entry into manual trades that apprenticeship was commonly used in the past. Some confusion has arisen from a lax use of terms.

“One is struck,” writes Mr. Dearle, “by the very significant extent to which the term apprentice actually survives to-day; and this suggests that the frequent and confident assertion that ‘apprenticeship is dead,’ may be the result of a too hasty diagnosis. . . . At the present day the term is often

*percentage  
of fee  
27.4 of  
div. 7.5  
(comp. paper)*

used to denote practically all boys who are learning a trade, whether they are working under an Indenture or not.”<sup>1</sup>

And again :

“By many persons, more particularly employers of labour and their foremen, it” (i.e., the term apprenticeship) “is used generically to cover the position of all boys who are learning a trade under whatever form of agreement.”<sup>2</sup>

As a statement of fact, this is no doubt true ; but the continued use of the term becomes misleading in proportion as its connotation is confused or distorted. Before, therefore, we can decide how far “apprenticeship is dead,” we must ask what are the essential elements of the apprenticeship system.

It has already been suggested that the essence of apprenticeship is its conception of the boy as a learner ; so that the value of his work is measured, not by its present convenience, but by the training which it gives for future competence. In the apprentice system this conception of the boy-worker was safeguarded and embodied in a formal

<sup>1</sup> *Industrial Training*, pp. 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 19.

contract between the boy and the boy's parents on the one part, and the master on the other. The master contracted to teach. The boy contracted to remain in his master's service for a term of years—a period deemed necessary to win proficiency—to work for him, and to learn by working. The master further—and this was vital to the agreement—undertook to teach a *definite proficiency*, so that at the termination of his apprenticeship the boy might graduate as a craftsman. These were essential elements in apprenticeship—recognition of the position of the apprentice as a learner, contract to teach, contract to teach a definite skill. The absence of any one of these elements destroys the character of apprenticeship. The form in which the contract was drawn—that of sealed Indentures—was relatively unimportant. If the practice of indentured apprenticeship alone had fallen into disuse, apprenticeship in its true nature might quite conceivably survive. But it cannot survive without agreement, however expressed, to teach, because upon such agreement the whole system depends. As a matter of fact, the disuse of Indentures is but a natural outcome of the disuse of teaching. In the

rare cases in which there is contract to teach on the one part, and to continue in the service of the master for a term of years in order to learn on the other, Indentures are usually preserved. Where they have been abandoned it has been either because the employer was unwilling or unable to teach or the boy unwilling to bind himself to learn. The fact and not the form of agreement matters. A further confusion also needs correction. The term apprentice, as Mr. Dearle says, is commonly applied to "all boys who are learning a trade." But a boy may in a measure learn without being *taught*. He may "pick up his trade" by observation, by practice and by the use of his wits; and this expression is actually used to denote the method by which boys frequently acquire a knowledge of their trade. But in such a case there is no contract, and can therefore be no true apprenticeship. An expressed or tacit understanding that a boy shall be given opportunity to learn is too indefinite a concession to constitute an agreement, while, besides, it involves the confession that the boy is primarily engaged as a worker, and is a learner only incidentally and by permission: and this



strikes at the very heart of the apprenticeship principle.

Among the industrial changes which have tended to the breakdown of a pure system of apprenticeship two stand out conspicuously—specialization and the increasing use of machinery. Both these changes are permanent, and both progressive; and in so far as they have destroyed or modified apprenticeship there is no hope of repair. Specialization and machinery alike are the result of industrial evolution. They have grown out of modern industry, demanded by, and adapted to, its needs. They are being continually pushed by the needs which called them forth to minuter and finer development. Specialization will be further specialized, and machinery will make further conquests of handicraft. If, therefore, it is not possible to construct a new system of apprenticeship, retaining the essential features of the old under new conditions—a system which can be worked under the influence of specialization and machinery—then apprenticeship is indeed dead.

Specialization varies not only in degree but in kind. In its widest application it

subdivides what was once a single trade into departments, or, rather perhaps, into sectional trades. Thus, to take the most prominent example, engineering divides into pattern-making, moulding, fitting and turning. This broader specialization tends rather to widen than to restrict the choice of a career. For these sectional engineering trades are self-contained, are skilled, and demand training. A boy sets out to become a fitter or a turner. He does not expect to become completely an engineer. The parent trade has propagated trades; and these trades, demanding skill and training, present in themselves no barrier to the use of a true apprenticeship system. Rather, it might appear that the subdivision of a trade so large and complex that to learn the whole of it is impracticable, has made apprenticeship more possible. As a matter of fact, such trades are not usually entered by way of apprenticeship; but for this the reason is to be found, not in any essential inadaptability of apprenticeship to their conditions, but in the loosening of the system from other causes. And, in fact, whether under the name of apprentice or not, boys do in most cases

succeed in learning these sub-trades with more or less thoroughness, and graduate into skilled employment. The mode of entrance, form of engagement, method of teaching or learning, are matters variously adjusted by different firms, or perhaps by local custom.

It is in proportion as this specialization by subdivision becomes more minute that it introduces into the manual trades the danger of incomplete equipment and therefore of future unemployment. There comes a specialization into *processes*. This process work demands a limited skill—the kind of manipulative skill which grows with constant repetition of a single operation. Such minute skill, being automatic, is also rapid; and is therefore of considerable value to the employer. But a skill easily attainable commands a comparatively low rate of pay. Further, the limited process may be of service only in work of a particular kind, specialized by certain firms. In consequence the market for the aptitude of the process-worker may be exceedingly narrow, and his danger of unemployment correspondingly great. It is in this process-specialization that the influence of machinery and mechanical methods of pro-

duction makes itself felt. A boy may be specialized on a machine: and that machine itself may be a specialized contrivance for the turning out of work needed only by a particular firm or by a few firms. In these cases, of course, even the simplest manipulative skill is at its lowest. The worker engaged upon such tasks may descend below the level of the most limited skill and become merely a machine-minder. And in all minute specialization interest and intelligent co-operation yield place to monotony and routine, since the worker is engaged upon endless repetition of a process of whose relation to the finished work, or even to the next succeeding operation, it is not essential that he should know anything. And it is obvious that apprenticeship to a series of minute and unrelated processes is impossible, and the system, or anything like it, quite inapplicable. The conditions imposed on engineering through the war seem likely to give a permanent impetus to mechanical specialization. Messrs. Fleming and Pearce in their book on *Apprentice Training* note "the extension of automatic and semi-automatic production, and the splitting up of

machining operations, enabling products to be handled in bulk in a series of sequent operations"; and they consider that the labour of women, who have proved themselves capable of rapidly acquiring a limited manual dexterity, will be increasingly used in engineering.<sup>1</sup> If this prediction should be a true one, it will seriously complicate the problems of the boy in industry; but it might lead to a clearer demarcation between skilled and semi-skilled labour in the manual trades.

Specialization by subdivision, more or less minute, is not the only form. There may also be specialization in the sense that certain firms produce only certain articles, and do not themselves practise their trade in its entirety. Mr. Dearle found that this form of specialization is very common in London, and that it exercises an enormous influence on industrial training. It is most marked in cabinet-making.

A master confines himself to cabinets or bedroom suites, or cupboards, or even to one or two patterns of them. Thus he is only in the position to teach, and a boy to learn, a part of the business, and how much this will be varies with the character of the

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Principles of Apprentices Training*, pp. 6, 7.



article produced. On one he will acquire considerable knowledge of the tools and processes, on another the merest smattering: but in either case his knowledge will be incomplete, and he will have to move to other firms to complete it.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of this kind of specialization, again, is clearly to render apprenticeship impossible; and the number of boys who, entering upon work in a firm so specialized, have energy or initiative, even if they have opportunity, to move to another to complete their training, must be exceedingly small.

It will appear that the main cause of the disuse of apprenticeship in the manual trades, and the most formidable difficulty in adapting any uniform system of entrance and training to them, is the lack of definition between "skilled" and "unskilled" labour. The purpose of apprenticeship is training, and this presupposes the demand for a certain acquired skill and knowledge in the work to be done. But it is just this requisite knowledge and proficiency which is either an unknown quantity or is almost infinitely variable. In one case, it may be as wide as the trade itself: in another as narrow as the minutest

<sup>1</sup> *Industrial Training*, p. 47.

of its operations. There is no firm line of separation between skilled and unskilled work. Both terms are relative. Human adroitness and human intelligence may be more or less supplemented by mechanical contrivances, or may themselves more or less supplement them. Skill in its measure is required throughout; but the required skill may take years to acquire, or may be won in a few days. There is therefore no criterion of training, and accordingly no definable basis for a contract to teach. Nor, if a boy is, after the model of the old apprenticeship, "bound," can the term of years over which his binding should extend be equitably determined. If he is bound for a longer period than is needed to acquire the undefined skill he is to use, his apprenticeship becomes merely a fetter.

Accordingly we find that in certain trades which are still learned and practised as a whole, and do not lend themselves to specialization or mechanical methods, apprenticeship in its essential features continues. Plumbing may be taken as an example. Here there is technical knowledge to be gained, and manual proficiency to be acquired. The changes which modern improvements introduce into the work

increase instead of diminishing the requirement of knowledge. A plumber works alone. His work is varied within the limits of his trade. In a single day's work he may be called to apply the most various resources of his craft. To exercise it needs a theoretical and practical training extended over years. Hence, apprentice training of some sort is the only possible method by which he can become a plumber. In some other trades apprenticeship survives many radical changes, more perhaps through the influence of tradition and a long-established trade custom than because no other method is possible. Letterpress printing, for instance, has undergone changes as profound as those which have passed over engineering. Machinery is constantly opening new possibilities to the trade. Yet in most cases regular apprenticeship is still the method of entry. The tradition persists; but it persists because whatever machinery may be invented, there is still a large body of technical knowledge to be gained, of taste to be formed, and of practice to be perfected, which are only possessed after long training.

In all the manual trades—in those in which

apprenticeship survives as well as in those in which it is dead—large numbers of boys are employed in the work of labourers. They are engaged, not so much in the trade, as about it. Without the limited skill of the process-worker, their labour is turned to various account, according to the needs of the industry to which they are loosely attached. They are not, and cannot be, retained or absorbed at manhood. Yet it is untrue to say that such casual labour in connection with manual trades has been produced by modern conditions of industry. It has been extended by the development of machinery, by the subdivision of trades, and by the growth of large concerns. But it existed, and much in its present shape, in the days of simpler industrialism. “Many of the problems of the labour market which are sometimes thought to be of modern date,” writes Miss Jocelyn Dunlop, in her *History of English Apprenticeship*, “existed even in the best days of apprenticeship and guild control.” In most of the trades unskilled labour was employed. A large number of juvenile workers were unapprenticed and untrained. The plumber, the mason, and other craftsmen were assisted

by labourers. In the printing trade every master founder was permitted to employ one un-apprenticed boy. In Sheffield at the end of the seventeenth century the cutlers were permitted to call in the assistance of casual labourers in the work of grinding and hammering. The reason is significant, and has a modern sound. It was "judged impossible otherwise for them to make scythes so cheap as they were made in other places."<sup>1</sup> The golden age of apprenticeship was golden only for some. The apprentice received his training and graduated into skilled craftsmanship. A boy less fortunate remained untrained, and sank into casual labour and poverty. Apprenticeship did not solve the problems of boy-labour, and could not alone, if it were completely revived, solve them to-day.

In the manual trades, then, to sum up, we see the gradual decay of a system of entrance and training which, adapted to the simplicity of an earlier industrial order, is largely inapplicable to the complex industrial methods of to-day. What is far more serious, we can

<sup>1</sup> *English Apprenticeship and Child Labour: A History*, O. Jocelyn Dunlop, pp. 94 ff.



discern, under influence of this decay of apprenticeship, a tendency, which extends into all manner of trade-work, to subordinate a boy's training to his present usefulness. In the various kinds of repetition work, in machine-minding, and in what is frankly labouring, we see the complete victory of exploitation over training. It is very possible, however, to exaggerate the gloom of the picture. In the trades in which training is required boys generally succeed in achieving it, even though they do so by a process of "picking up" and not by one of formal and recognized instruction. In these trades, though the full system of apprenticeship will probably never be revived, there is no reason in the nature of the case why more systematic training should not be given, or why the principle of the boy as a learner should not be re-established. What is apparent is that no uniform system of entrance upon trades, and of training within them; is applicable to modern conditions. What was simple has become complex. The old high roads over which a boy was wont to travel to proficiency and competence have been broken up, and new ones are yet in making.

Workers in the manual trades enjoy on the whole fairly good conditions of labour. It is unusual for a boy of average strength, at least in normal times, to find his strength overtaxed by his work. His chief danger is not physical but mental. In the monotony of repetition work or the lack of interest in the constant production of a minute fraction of a whole, lies peril of a dullness of thought, a mechanical outlook, and a loss of alertness. Thrown into association with men, some of whom at any rate have lost mental vigour through a life of monotonous toil, a lad will often coarsen and become dull. Manual labour of the higher sort is without doubt mentally stimulating; but such manual labour as is often demanded in factory or workshop is a mental soporific. This is the worst reaction upon a boy of machine work and the subdivision of processes.

2. It is impossible to consider in detail, or even to enumerate, the regular avenues of employment outside the manual trades which are open to boys. The limit of choice is narrow. The manual trades, indeed, are numerous and varied enough; but of these trades, owing to their local distribution, pro-

bably a few only are open to any one boy. The alternative is often either a manual trade or some form of clerical work. Choice is further restricted because in working-class homes certain grades or social strata of employment are observed, and are seldom wandered from. The boy, for instance, whose working tradition is either a manual trade or office work would not consider the rougher sort of railway work as a possible opening. This strict limitation of choice is an important element in the problem. It inevitably increases the risk of misfits: a perfect fit may be unattainable. Kinds of work, too, which possess undeveloped potentialities of prospect and promise have no stimulus to develop them, and are suffered to lapse into the position of blind-alleys.

An exaggerated laudation of manual work, which in recent years has become almost an obsession with some social workers, and the vague persuasion of parents that it is good for a boy "to have a trade in his fingers," have brought office work—outside the manual trades the largest and most typical class of probationary work—into some disrepute. Boys are less easily recruited than formerly for it.

It should, however, be obvious even to the most enthusiastic apostle of manual labour that its desirability depends upon the aptitude of the boy who enters it ; and that the absorption of all boys in manual trades is impossible, even if it were desirable. Clerical work is a necessity. It must engage large numbers of boys. To seek to divert, instead of selecting, the candidates is manifest folly. To rail at office work as little better than a blind-alley tends to make it what it is untruly said to be.

As a fact, the status of clerical work tends to improve. Office organization becomes more complex and more responsible. In well-staffed offices of whatever class a boy of intelligence has the opportunity to carve his way ; and promotion is perhaps more frequently than in other kinds of work the reward of aptitude and steadiness. Wages compare favourably with those of a boy in a manual trade ; and if parents are at greater charge in dressing their boy suitably for the conventions of business life, this cost is balanced by the regularity of his work, and because his wages are forthcoming on holidays as on working days. The uncertainty of clerical work as a career for boys is not inherent, but accidental.

It is the result of casual methods of engagement, of the lack of definition in the work undertaken, and the absence of any tradition or custom of promotion. In the offices of Insurance Companies, in Banks (where boys are not usually taken before the age of sixteen, and seldom from the elementary schools) and in Municipal offices, selection is often made on the result of examination. But in commercial and professional offices engagement is usually a most perfunctory business. The employer is content with the guarantee of a fair school record and with probably ambiguous references as to moral character. A newspaper advertisement, asking curtly for an "office boy," is the most usual method of bringing employers and candidates into touch. The duties to be performed, the prospects of promotion, and even the rate of wage-increment, are undefined. The boy and his parents are no less hasty in accepting engagement. The boy has no career in mind. He has not decided whether he is seeking clerical employment as an end in itself, or is taking it up as a stepping-stone to other things. Entering, for example, the office of a shipping merchant, he has not determined



whether he aims at reaching some purely clerical post—becoming a clerk merely, or a book-keeper—or at graduating from the office into some “department” of the business. In consequence, there is much unintelligent waiting upon chance. A boy’s ambition has less direction than in the trades: he is more likely to look vaguely for “something to turn up.” And since the modern specialization of office work, which should give scope to a clearly marked career, creates also the need for a number of permanently subordinate workers, a boy who lacks initiative or keenness is in danger of drifting into a backwater.

In pure clerical work girls are, and are increasingly becoming, rivals to boys; but since they are for the most part engaged as shorthand typists, they are not brought into competition with boys whose aim and ambition in taking up commercial employment is defined. From the point of view of the boy’s prospects, indeed, it is sometimes a positive advantage that he should be excluded from these purely routine duties, since otherwise he might rest content with the position of shorthand clerk and typist, which does not afford adequate wages or prospect in man-

hood. In all kinds of commercial and professional office work what is needed to develop its prospects as a career for boys is clearer definition of position and promotion and better distribution of work, accompanied by more specific training both in the course of employment and in the Continuation School.

The absence of this organization, making the prospects of a boy in an office indeterminate, often also subjects him to long, late and irregular hours of work. There is at present no legislation controlling the work of boys in offices. Unlike boys in the trades, their hours are undefined. The Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools (1909) took much evidence of excessive hours of work in offices; and they include among the occupations in which hours are "so long or so inconveniently arranged" as to make it impossible for boys to attend evening Continuation Schools, the employment of boys in "shipping offices, and in counting houses where accounts have to be made up after the shops are closed."<sup>1</sup> This irregularity of employment is in most cases the result of sheer carelessness, and is not dictated by any

<sup>1</sup> Report, Vol. II, pp. 132, 133. Cp. pp. 343, 386, 388.

necessity. It seriously discredits office work as a career for boys ; and, of course, renders intelligent training for it impossible.

Employment of boys in the wholesale warehouses of the home and export trade, offering some prospect, is also subject to the evil of irregular hours. Legally, the work comes under the control (as to hours only) of the Shops Act, 1912. A "young person" may not be employed for longer than 74 hours, including meal times, in any one week. But hours are both uncertain and late. The late Mr. Charles E. B. Russell, giving evidence before the Departmental Committee on the Hours and Conditions of Work of Van-boys and Warehouse Boys (1913), and speaking of conditions in Manchester, said :

A warehouse boy in an export shipping house, of which there are many in Manchester, will be employed from 9 o'clock in the morning till frequently 8 o'clock, and on mail nights later at night. If he should happen to be unfortunately employed by a firm trading with Constantinople he may be employed till 12 o'clock at night on mail nights.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee*, Cd. 6887, 1913, Question 780, p. 28.

## III

The constant characteristic of the blind-alley work which has now to be reviewed, is that it is temporary. It ends abruptly, as one's walk in a *cul de sac* is terminated by the wall at the end of it. If a boy becomes a messenger, an errand-boy, or a page, he enters upon employment which can last at longest for a few years. In early youth he outgrows it. It is true that, too old for the work on which he began, he may still be retained, and set to some other work. But the chances of this are slender. The number of boys engaged upon fugitive boyish employment is far in excess of the number that can be retained. And retention, avoiding the scandal of total unemployment, is generally little better than concealment of the industrial disablement which the boyish work has caused, since it is, and is bound to be, retention in unskilled work which may itself be hardly more stable than that from which the boy has been promoted. If, on the other hand, as usually happens, a boy, outgrowing blind-alley employment, is incontinently dismissed, his age makes it impossible for him satisfac-

torily to start on probationary work. Retained or dismissed, the blind-alley worker descends, because of the waste of his first working years, in the scale of employment.

The danger which thus inevitably threatens the boy-worker is aggravated by other characteristics of blind-alley employment. The wage paid or the money indirectly earned in this kind of work is often extravagantly large. This, which is a lure to lead boys into such employment, becomes a temptation to keep them there. They will not willingly exchange such high earnings for the more moderate wages of progressive work ; and, having learned to value work merely for its money return, they seek, when their blind-alley ends, not for employment with sounder prospect, but for some job with equal or higher remuneration. Nor, apart from this, is escape from a blind-alley easy. Working hours are often long and late. A boy lacks opportunity, even if he has the will, to seek better work. If he would not be out of employment altogether, he must bide his time, and make the best of a bad job. This is the case with boys who continue in the *cul de sac* until, at the age of sixteen or seventeen, its "blind" wall bars



their progress. But the changeable boys, who easily grow dissatisfied with their lot and migrate from job to job, fare no better. They merely pass from one blind-alley to another in frank search for higher wages.

While the characteristics of blind-alley work are clearly distinguishable, it is so varied in form as to defy classification. It is done for the most part in the service of the public, and in public places—in the streets, in shops, in railway stations, in hotels, restaurants, billiard rooms and places of amusement. Much of it, like the work of messengers, errand-boys and van-boys, might be classified under the head of "Transport"; and it is doubtless this fact which led the Poor Law Commission to trace the rise of the problem "to the enormous growth of cities as distributive centres." Much of it is ministry to amusement, luxury or mere display, and could be abandoned without loss. A glance at some leading types of blind-alley employment will best illustrate its character.

1. The employment of postal telegraph messengers was justly regarded at the time of the publication of the Reports of the Poor Law Commission as a conspicuous example

of blind-alley work and of its evils. Thousands of telegraph messengers, unabsorbable into the Postal Service, were year by year dismissed at the age of sixteen, or older, and thrown, untrained and helpless, upon the labour market. The story of their subsequent struggles—their often ineffectual search for settled work and drift into casual labour—is told in the Report on Boy-Labour which Mr. Cyril Jackson presented to the Poor Law Commission.<sup>1</sup> On the 31st March, 1910, there were 15,760 postal telegraph messengers in the United Kingdom. During the year which ended on that day, 6,782 of these boys, over the age of sixteen, ceased to be messengers. Of these, 1,615 only were retained in the Post Office. The rest became unemployed.<sup>2</sup>

In 1910, the Postmaster-General appointed a Standing Committee on Boy-Labour in the Post Office to consider means of remedying a state of things which had become a scandal. In reading the five Reports which this Committee has issued, and studying their recommendations, we may watch a serious effort

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Boy-Labour*, Cd. 4632, 1909, pp. 63 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *First Report of Standing Committee on Boy-Labour in the Post Office*, Cd. 5504, 1911, par. 4.

to convert a notorious blind-alley into probationary employment.

Before the war suspended their efforts, by largely denuding the service of boy-messengers, the Committee had at least greatly improved the position, and had at any rate contrived to avoid the dismissal at sixteen of the boys. They reduced the number of messengers employed, and increased the openings in postal service into which they could be absorbed. By the 31st December, 1914, the number of messengers had been reduced to 13,217; and in their Fifth Report (1915) the Committee claim that in the year 1914 "it was possible to absorb every boy-messenger who was both willing and fit to enter the permanent service of the State." This suggests that the problem has been solved. A close study of the Reports, however, throws doubt upon this hopeful conclusion.

Under the Committee's scheme, the retention of a boy in the service is left in doubt until he has passed the age of sixteen. It is then decided on the result of a Civil Service Examination. But it remains doubtful until a later age to what position the boy, if retained, can hope to attain; and entrance upon the position

which he finally wins is normally deferred until he is nineteen, up to which age it is contemplated that he should continue in the work of a messenger. The positions for which the messengers are eligible differ widely in value; and the better posts—those, for instance, of telegraphist and sorter—are few in number compared with the numbers competing for them. The great majority of the messengers can look for no better position than that of a postman. In the year 1914, of the 2,325 messengers retained in the service on reaching the age of sixteen, 1,535 became postmen or assistant-postmen. According to the Select Committee on Post Office Servants, commonly known as the Holt Committee, (1913), the maximum wage then obtainable by postmen in London, reached by annual increments after many years' service, was 35s. a week, and in the provinces was 30s. The Committee recommended a maximum of 43s. in London and of 37s. in the provinces. Some of the messengers, too, are absorbed in the mechanical branch of the service. A long section of the Holt Report is occupied with discussion of the engineering staff, among whom there was clearly much discontent. It

appeared that, in addition to skilled workmen, unskilled labourers were employed at a labourer's hourly wage; and the "unskilled labourers," says the Holt Committee, "are recruited *from boy-messengers*, and through the Government Labour Exchanges." It was complained that a boy did not know whether he was to be a mechanic or a lineman; that the proportion of boys to men was sometimes excessive; and that the boys were often employed on men's work, were kept on cord-repairing, and were imperfectly trained. The Post Office reply to these strictures appears to admit the most serious indictment; for it was urged that "as the work of the mechanics' repairing shops includes a larger proportion of simple repairing work than formerly, boy-messengers are able to make themselves useful in the shops without such long training as was previously necessary."<sup>1</sup>

The Post Office seeks to recruit for the work of messengers the best boys from the elementary schools. A candidate must have passed the seventh standard. The retained boys have further passed successfully through

<sup>1</sup> *Report from the Select Committee on Post Office Servants, 1913, pp. 209, 210, 212.*



a further sifting. They have proved themselves through some years of messenger service to be of good character, have satisfied the Civil Service Examiners, and reached a high standard of physical fitness. The value of the prospects offered must be judged in relation to such selected boys, and compared with the prospects open to boys of equal promise in other kinds of work. So judged, it will appear that the Post Office has not, after all, solved the problem of its messengers. To retain boys, but to retain them with prospects indeterminate, and at the end, in many cases, little better than those of casual labour, is indeed to avoid the scandal of wholesale dismissal. But it is to postpone the problem until a later age, and in part to cloak it. The work retains the characteristic features and dangers of a blind-alley; and it is impossible to see how this character can be changed.

The postal telegraph messenger is the leading, and, in spite of his precarious position, the most fortunate, example of a numerous class. Messenger work absorbs thousands of boys engaged by private employers. The streets of London especially are alive with boy-messengers employed by cable companies, by

press agencies, and by the District Messenger Company, which itself engages in normal times from seven hundred to nine hundred boys. The employment is without direct prospect. Nor is prospect usually expected by the boys. If they remain in the work until sixteen, seventeen, or older, it is not in expectation of promotion, but in sheer indifference, or because they are satisfied with the wages, which are in some cases high. Though the normal hours of duty are not excessive—the average being nine hours a day—the messengers of some of these companies frequently work “overtime,” and sometimes for fourteen, fifteen or sixteen hours. Not by any means always the poorest class of boys, either in home conditions or in school record, are found among these messengers; and the work is responsible for the economic waste of many promising boys.

2. Under the heading of “Transport” would be included the work of errand-boys and van-boys. Errand-boys are most largely employed in the retail shops of the providing trades, and, outside these trades, by printers and stationers. In so far as they are engaged “in or about a shop,” they may not (under

the age of eighteen) be employed "for a longer period than seventy-four hours, including meal times, in any one week" (Shops Act, 1912, 2 (2)). But their hours, in spite of this regulation, are often long and late. If a boy's employment terminates for a half-holiday on Wednesday, say, at one o'clock, he may legally be employed twelve hours on Monday and Tuesday, thirteen hours on Thursday, and fifteen or even more on Friday and Saturday: and these maximum hours are frequently worked, for though under the Shops Act there is no legal compulsion to grant an errand-boy a half-holiday, since he is not a "shop assistant" within the meaning of the Act, this is generally done. The work is not only long-continued, but severe. Delivering goods at the houses of customers, or engaged in sundry acts of helpfulness in the shop, the errand-boy walks or stands during the whole of his day. He has often ponderous weights to carry or draw. Exposed to all weathers, he has seldom proper protection.

Because of these severe conditions of work, long hours, and the necessity to be at work when their friends are at play, errand-boys are probably the most shifting class of workers.

If it be true that we are "a nation of shop-keepers," it is remarkable that very few boys look for a career in the retail trades. And there is little opportunity. Some of the larger firms of grocers, controlling a number of branches, appear to recognize something like formal apprenticeship; but this is not for the errand-boys. To the errand-boy as a rule no prospect is offered. If he stays in the service of a large firm, he may be retained as packer, carter, or porter. The boy employed in a small shop has no chance of advancement. But he seldom looks for any; and the number of boys who stay in such work until they are too old to start elsewhere is negligible, except in places where there are hardly any industrial openings.

The work of "van-boys" was the subject of inquiry by a Departmental Committee in 1913.<sup>1</sup> The Committee, while, in strict reading of their terms of reference, ruling out the congruous work of errand-boys, group together under the title of "van-boys" several distinct employments. They include the "nippers,"

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Departmental Committee on the Hours and Conditions of Employment of Van-boys and Warehouse-boys, 1913, Cd. 6886*

or cart-boys, who accompany the driver of a van or lorry ; boys engaged on parcel delivery from the lorries of carrying-firms or from the vans of shops, and boys employed in connection with the tramway services of several cities. They found that the best condition and prospects were those of the boys employed by the Railway Companies, where the hours are regular, and not over long, though there is night-work ; and the boys are generally absorbed as porters, ticket-collectors, and clerks in the parcel offices. In the case of boys employed by large carrying firms and in connection with shops, aerated water works, bakeries and laundries, there was much complaint of excessive and late hours. There was evidence that carriers' boys in Manchester, beginning work at 7.30 in the morning, sometimes did not finish until nine, ten, eleven or even twelve o'clock at night ; that in Liverpool it was " quite common " for them to be seen going home at midnight, with the prospect of starting work again at eight o'clock the next morning ; and that in London similarly long and late hours were worked. These instances were apparently not the rule, but were representative of frequent practice.



The actual work of these boys, travelling on lorry or van, is not nearly as hard as that of errand-boys who walk out with orders, or carry them on cycle vans; the Committee considered the occupation "a healthy one," and heard no complaint of physical ill-effect.

Except in the case of the Railway Companies, prospect is slight and indefinite. The representatives of the larger carrying firms said that a large proportion of their drivers had risen from the position of van-boys, but expert witnesses asserted that promotion was in the majority of cases impossible; and the Committee concluded "that the better boys obtain permanent employment, but that the majority, though they are not dismissed, do drift out," and that it is "impossible for them all to be absorbed." In the case of van-boys employed by retail shops, however, the Committee found that they "have ample opportunities of being absorbed in one post or another in the shop's business": they are used as despatch clerks, or become "porters, window-cleaners, and furniture removers"—none of which diverse occupations offers a very brilliant goal. The Federation of Grocers Associations informed the Committee that "a

considerable number of retail grocers' van-boys qualify as shop assistants, for the reason that apprenticeships have gone out of fashion . . . and that employment as a van-boy is one of the recognized means by which the boys get into the trade." The witness, however, spoke in very general terms, and adduced no evidence on this point.<sup>1</sup>

3. When from messengers, errand-boys and van-boys, we turn to consider the employment of boys in hotels, restaurants and clubs, we are entering upon an investigation which has been touched by no official enquiry, and considering a class of boy-workers who, curiously enough, seem to have failed to interest social workers. Yet the work absorbs thousands of boys; it is in some ways a peculiarly insidious blind-alley, and, being performed in the service of the public, it should appeal to their sympathy and interest.

When a boy enters upon this work he generally does so as a "page." It is usually his first adventure in the working world. In London especially, it has peculiar fascination for boys; and to the West End hotels and

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of Evidence taken before the Departmental Committee on Van-boys and Warehouse-boys, 1913, Cd. 6887, Sec. 6463.*

restaurants they come from every district. The attraction of the work lies mainly in the promise of high earnings in "tips." Peculiarly true of London, this is in measure true of all big towns, even where the possibilities of good industrial openings are relatively far more numerous. The boys who enter upon the work are of different social strata: but they come for the most part from good homes, have taken good places in school, and are boys who, if they had not been diverted by the lure of this work, would have passed into the better sorts of employment. It is also not uncommon to find in hotel work boys who, thrown upon their own resources through the death or neglect of parents, maintain themselves on their earnings, and who either "sleep in" at the hotel, or find quarters in lodging houses.

The conditions of work differ widely between hotels, restaurants and clubs, and between different classes of hotels. The service of restaurant pages is often futile and meretricious. They stand in the vestibule or "on the doors." They run messages, or book theatre seats for patrons. They are apparently supposed to add an appearance of assiduous service

and of smartness to the establishment. This is their public rôle. It has probably been preceded by some hours of less conspicuous but more useful employment. They have polished the brasses and furniture, fetched and carried in the preparation to receive customers, and made themselves useful in sundry such ways. The service of pages in hotels and clubs is more varied and useful. In the larger hotels a page will escort the arriving guest to his room; and sometimes there is a sort of promotion from the ranks of the ordinary pages to the position of "reception page," more gallantly attired, for this ceremonious function. The pages for the rest are at the beck and call of the guests, perform any of a hundred small services for them; and in the event of callers or messages arriving for a visitor, pursue him from room to room with loud invocation of his name or "number." The use of boys in this capacity has increased enormously in recent years; and there is now hardly a hotel which does not employ their services in ways that vary with the subtle differences in tone and ceremony which distinguish one hotel from another.

The legal position of a page in restaurant or hotel is apparently ambiguous. The Shops Act, 1912, was amended, in respect of 'premises for the sale of refreshments,' by the Shops Act, 1913; but this Act varied only the regulations which control meal times and holidays, leaving other provisions of the earlier Act untouched. Among others the enactment that a person under the age of eighteen shall not be employed "in or about a shop" for more than seventy-four hours a week, meal times included, stands; and a case under the earlier Act from which this clause was embodied had decided that a hotel was a "shop" within the meaning of the Act, and that a page-boy, not being "wholly employed as a domestic servant," was subject to it. Whether pages in hotels or restaurants, or both, are included in the provisions regarding meal times and holidays seems to be doubtful, owing to an extreme looseness of wording in the defining section (Shops Act, 1913, 1 (5)). However that may be, pages in both restaurants and hotels are usually granted either a half-holiday in each week or a whole holiday a fortnight, in accordance with the provisions of the Act.



Thus, as in the case of errand-boys, a margin of long hours is available on other days in the week without infringement of the seventy-four hour weekly limit. In addition to this, it is usual in restaurants, and in some hotels, to allow boys two or three hours "off duty" during the slackest time of the day. Whether legally, if a case arose, it could be successfully maintained that these "off duty" hours could be deducted from the period of employment, it is difficult to say; but as a matter of fact only the hours during which the boy is actually working are counted as those during which he is "employed." Pages generally work on one of two plans—either in early and late "shifts," or throughout the day and evening, with an "off duty" time. A twelve-hour duty is common. At one very famous London hotel the pages work for thirteen and a half hours, without break except for meals, the grant of a holiday bringing their hours within the legal weekly limit of employment. The hours are often very late. In West End restaurants (before the war) pages worked until 12.30 a.m., either on a "late shift," beginning at noon, or, in cases where the "off duty" plan pre-

vailed, from 9.30 in the morning. Hotel pages are not usually employed after midnight, although commonly until that time. Pages in clubs (whose work is probably outside the scope of the Shops Acts) are sometimes on duty until the small hours of the morning. At seaside hotels during the "season" for such places, pages are sometimes worked, in sheer defiance of regulations, for fifteen or sixteen hours a day.

The life of a page will probably appear to be one of ease, if not of elaborate idleness. In fact, the conditions of his work, if not severe, are peculiarly tiring and exhausting. In restaurants, where he has hours of standing, and little movement, he finishes jaded, footsore and cramped. In some of the hotels, on the merciful American plan, seats are provided on which the pages rest when not running about on messages; but in many cases they are never allowed to sit down. Their duty of pursuing missing guests takes them in the course of the day through miles of rooms, and up incredible flights of stairs, for they are forbidden to use the lifts. In big hotels this work is practically ceaseless. Visitors are exacting, and the hall porter

is frequently a petty tyrant, endowed with plenary powers of punishment and dismissal. Boys soon show clearly the reaction upon their health of the weariness and fatigue of their work. They grow pallid, heavy-eyed, and listless. A constant complaint also is of the badness or insufficiency of the food. "Don't talk about hotel food!" "The food's not fit to eat!" "My lad gets nothing to eat on the early shift, because he can't touch the food they give them for dinner," are aspersions from boys and their parents on the culinary departments of hotels and restaurants famous throughout England.

In spite of these unsatisfactory conditions of work, there is no blind-alley from which it is more difficult to induce a boy to escape than this. The main inducement is the "tips." It is common enough for a boy to make anything from fifteen shillings to a pound a week, or more, in this way. His wages are not large—from five shillings to seven and sixpence: the latter figure being paid in establishments in which "No Gratuities" is the much advertised rule. If a boy begins as a page he will probably fre-

quently change his place of work, but it is most unusual for him to seek deliberately an entirely fresh start in other employment. He acquires a certain *cachet*, enters a certain "set," and, besides, usually grows too listless to plan and entertain ambition. In a restaurant he has frankly no prospect of any kind. In a hotel he may achieve something which passes as promotion—become a lift attendant, a luggage porter, or what not. Since the war has curtailed the supply of young foreigners, an elder page may be taken on as a "commie," that is as a boy-waiter, attendant on a waiter, in the grill room or restaurant: but the future of these boys is doubtful, and the conditions and hours of their work deplorable. The majority of the pages are simply discarded and fail to reach even these problematical positions. Dismissal for some small fault or mistake, or merely because the boy is too big to fit a page's uniform, is summary and instant. At the frown of the omnipotent hall porter the boy goes. If young enough to obtain similar work, he generally does so without formality or delay. If too old, he drifts into any unskilled work which presents itself after a

longer or shorter search. There is no class of work more precarious, more unsettling, or more disastrous to the career and character of a boy.

Even so rapid a glance at the boy's working world as we have now taken shows the victory, more or less advanced, of exploitation over training—the prevailing tradition of using the immature service of a boy for what it is worth in the present, instead of educating and developing it into permanence and competence. In spite of the higher valuation of technical and workshop training which the war has certainly stimulated, the tendency of the manual trades is, without doubt, away from sound apprenticeship. In commercial employment, promotion is undefined and systematic training unthought of. The blind-alleys unconcealedly exploit boy-labour. The habitual carelessness of entrance upon work, the lack of enquiry concerning prospect and training, show that the tradition of immediate employment for wages is acquiesced in by parents as by employers. The disturbance of industry and commerce caused by the war not only leaves this tradition unshaken, but



is even likely to establish it. During the war, juvenile labour has been almost confessedly exploited; and the high wages which it has won will make the average boy more impatient than before with the lower remuneration, if more assured prospect, of probationary work. The variety, indefiniteness, and, as concerns the future, aimlessness of boy-work prove the futility of attempting the revival of any uniform system of engagement and training. The only hope lies in sincere conversion from the bad tradition, realizing its injustice, danger and waste, and the embodiment of a better conception of boy-work as a training in schemes variously adapted to meet the differing conditions of this or that employment.

“Can the age of adolescence,” ask the Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War, “be brought out of the purview of economic exploitation and into that of the social conscience? Can the conception of the juvenile as primarily a little wage-earner be replaced by the conception of the juvenile as primarily the workman and citizen in training? Can it be established that the educational purpose is to be the dominating one, without as well as within the school doors, during those formative years between twelve and eighteen?”

If not, clearly no remedies at all are possible in the absence of the will by which alone they could be rendered effective." <sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Departmental Committee on Juvenile Education in Relation to Employment After the War*, p. 5.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CHOICE OF WORK

#### I

THE entrance of a boy upon work is almost invariably made a few days after the school-exemption age has been reached. That this transition was imminent has, of course, been known to all concerned since the boy began to go to school. It might be supposed that the foresight of parents, even of those who look forward to the moment of school-exemption chiefly as that at which their boy will be able to assist in his upkeep, would have made some attempt to provide for it. Yet this is seldom the case. The hour of leaving school usually finds a complete unpreparedness. The kind of employment into which the boy is to enter has probably not been decided, or even thought about. Ex-

empt from school, he finds himself in nine cases out of ten ignorant of the walk in life he is to pursue, and without any prospect of a "place." Obviously the reasonable method of vocational choice is to make decision first as to the kind of work to be followed, and afterwards to seek an opening in that employment. Practically, however, this method is generally reversed. Search, if search it can be called, is turned to the finding of a situation; and the first situation entered decides, sometimes for good and all, the kind of work that is pursued. In this topsy-turvy conception of industrial embarkation lies the secret of all future troubles; but in the circumstances it is perfectly natural. The choice of fitting work may be a lengthy business. It requires a knowledge of industrial opportunities which the parents do not possess, and a discrimination of which they are incapable. A "place," however, can readily and quickly be found. It is found; and the larger question is left to adjust itself well or ill afterwards.

The means by which the "place" is found, or rather lighted upon, are various. The father or the mother may learn of an opening

through an obliging friend, who undertakes to "speak for" the boy. In such cases the influence of the obliging friend is often exaggerated; and it is considered that to enter work under his ægis is a piece of remarkably good fortune. The boy is exhorted that he must study "to do him credit." In localities in which one trade is dominant it may be tacitly assumed that the boy's road in life is to be found in it; and, fit or unfit, he may slip into it, perhaps after a preliminary spell of casual work as errand-boy or what-not. The determination of employment by dominant local industry, however, tends to be less frequent, perhaps because of parental discontent with the state of the trade, perhaps because of increased facilities for travelling. Possibly, under home supervision, the boy may seek a start by the expensive and troublesome method of writing letters in answer to newspaper advertisements. This method has an air of conscientiousness which is fictitious, since what is sought is still merely a "place," and no discrimination is attempted between the situations applied for. But very often the boy himself, ignoring all cumbrous methods of vocational choice, finds his work in his own

(2)

(3)

(4)



way, and by his own unaided enterprise. He is as keen, be it remembered, to make this new venture as his parents are that he should make it. He accepts, with never a thought, the conception of the step as the finding of a "job." He may have certain dim preferences. He talks with boys already at work. He has, maybe, a chum who seems to be doing well, and at least shows no discontent with the work he has found. That, or something no less flimsy, may give our boy his start. His walks abroad reveal to him at least that there is no lack of open doors. Through one of them he enters. He has "got himself started"; and is much commended by his parents for smartness and industry.

This recklessness in embarking upon work cannot be attributed wholly to the carelessness of parents or be taken as a sign that they are selfishly indifferent to the future welfare of their boy. In some cases, no doubt, and not always in cases of family want, parents deliberately exploit their boys for the sake of their immediate earnings. But these cases are exceptional. What is called "the greed of parents" is an easy explanation which does not cover the facts; and it is often

advanced because of imperfect sympathy with the parents' point of view. Here is the boy, exempt from school, and according to all tradition ripe for immediate entrance upon work. His future is unplanned. For himself he has, and can have, no informed opinion about it. It is not well to allow him "to run wild." It appears useless to keep him at school. He has passed his standards, and longer continuance would only mean repetition. Since he is accredited as of wage-earning age and capacity, why should he not begin to earn? His name is perhaps entered on the books of the Employment Bureau; but by the time that notification of an opening is received the boy has very likely found one for himself. Or—and this is a very common experience—the parent may conclude that no harm can result from sending the boy to some frankly unpromising work for the time, with the mental proviso that he shall later be more deliberately placed. It will serve, the phrase goes, as a "breaking in." This unhappy compromise is generally a fatal surrender to temptation. Time slides by. Vague possibilities of getting on to something obscure the hopeless lack of promise in the work.

The difficulties of vocational choice increase as the boy grows older. The wages of the unpromising employment, higher than those of the probationary work which ought to be sought, have begun to be reckoned on in the weekly family budget. Advisers, importunate at the moment of leaving school, no longer press with offers of assistance. The work, entered in compromise as a "breaking in," is acquiesced in with diminishing resistance. This accounts for the fact that boys from the best homes, and the most excellently endowed, are found in hopeless blind-alleys side by side with boys who come from homes of poverty or thriftlessness, and who are themselves fit only for low-grade work. They are thrown together through the haste, ignorance and chaos of the entrance upon industry.

The difficulties of vocational choice, indeed, even if it be undertaken with care and knowledge, are great. Large cities, smaller towns, villages and country districts, have their peculiar difficulties. In a great city—and in London pre-eminently,—the demand for boy-labour is virtually unlimited. But much of the demand is for casual work; and the demand for boys in skilled occupations may

be proportionately less than in a moderately sized manufacturing town. In London also, and to a less degree in other great cities, the tendency is to concentrate skilled industries in certain localities. The distances which separate district from district, and the expense of transit, tend to isolate these localities—to make of a large city, in fact, a congeries of industrial communities—and to limit the supply of boys to those living in or near these centres. Skilled employment may be actually unattainable, or at any rate the cost of travelling to the place of work may make so great an inroad into the small wages of apprenticeship as to reduce them to almost nothing. This fact, combined with the imperfect understanding of the importance of choice, and the carelessness of entrance upon work, actually produces a greater supply of boys for all manner of unpromising employment than can be absorbed. At the same time this constant surplus of boys suggests to employers new ways in which their labour can be profitably exploited, and an essentially artificial demand for casual boy-work is created. In smaller centres, on the other hand, the demand may be so specialized to the needs

of one or two industries that the difficulty is to place with fitness those boys who, for one reason or another, are unsuited to these dominant local industries; while there are largely populated towns—seaside resorts, for instance—in which the demand for juvenile labour is almost negligible. Apart, too, from such questions of supply and demand, the breakdown of formal apprenticeship, and the substitution of casual engagement, make the entrance into industry almost inevitably haphazard and incalculable. The entrance is so easy and characterless as to conceal the importance of what is being done. These and other difficulties of choice baffle not only the parent who launches his boy on work without advice, but also the Employment Committees and Bureaux which have in recent years been established, and whose work we must next consider.

## II

The establishment of official Employment Bureaux for young workers under the Board of Trade or the Board of Education was



preceded by a number of voluntary organizations which aimed at the better vocational placing of boys and girls. Of these the best known was the London Apprenticeship and Skilled Employment Association. Similar Associations in provincial towns were largely modelled on it, and sometimes worked in affiliation with it. These Associations did a useful but limited work. Their influence was circumscribed not only by the relatively small number of boys whom they touched, but also by their conception and aim. Attention was concentrated almost exclusively upon the attempt to induce boys to enter the skilled manual trades, and to enter them by way of indentured apprenticeship. As a protest against the waste of blind-alley occupations, the effort was admirable. But it is probable that the Associations failed to realize that the old apprenticeship was obsolescent, and that their work was made relatively ineffective through a vain attempt to revive it. There was sometimes a tendency to make a fetich of indentures.

Less formally and systematically, but much more widely, boys, before the establishment of official Employment Bureaux, were often

guided into work through the good offices of their school teachers, and the workers in lads' clubs. Many of the clubs had employment bureaux as part of their organization; and schoolmasters were in more or less intimate touch with employers in their vicinity for the placing of their boys. These efforts were of necessity empirical, and lacked resources to make them, even in the small area within which they worked, complete. The schoolmaster was probably less acquainted with the conditions of industry than the club worker; while, on the other hand, the boys with whom the club dealt had as a rule already embarked upon work, and the club registry was more concerned in retrieving early mistakes or in finding employment for boys out of work than in directing choice from the beginning. Nevertheless, schoolmasters and club workers possessed a more intimate knowledge of, and sympathy with, the boys whom they helped than any official; and, however carefully the entrance upon work is subsequently organized, these elements of knowledge, sympathy and goodwill should be enlisted in order to save it from coldness and officialism.

The present position of officially appointed Advisory Committees for Juvenile Employment can be understood only after a survey of the history of their establishment. The Labour Exchanges Act was passed in 1909. It gave powers to the Board of Trade to set up advisory Committees for Juvenile Employment in connection with the Labour Exchanges which it called into being. The duty of these Advisory Committees was to advise "with regard to the management of any Labour Exchange in its district in relation to juvenile applicants for employment." This was so ambiguous as to be almost unintelligible. The Committee, however, were also empowered "either by themselves or in co-operation with any other bodies or persons, to give information, advice and assistance with respect to choice of employment and other matters bearing thereon." But it was provided that the Board of Trade, or a Board of Trade officer, should undertake no responsibility with regard to the advice or assistance given. This proviso, together with the voluntary character of the Advisory Committees, and the lack of definition in their aims and methods, went far to neutralize the value of the enact-

ment. Advisory Committees might or might not be established. Established, they might rest content with general advice as to the management, as concerns juvenile applicants, of a specified local Exchange—which advice might or might not be adopted. If they zealously proceeded to exercise their further powers of informing, advising and assisting youthful applicants for employment, the youthful applicant, ignoring or misunderstanding the advice, might proceed to the Labour Exchange and obtain employment of the very kind against which the Committee had warned him! In this uncertain, and even absurd, position the Labour Exchanges Act left the matter.

In 1910 was passed the Education (Choice of Employment) Act. It gave to local Education Authorities powers to “make arrangements, subject to the approval of the Board of Education, for giving to boys and girls under seventeen years of age, assistance with respect to the choice of suitable employment, by means of the collection and the communication of information, and the furnishing of advice.” This provision, it is clear, gave to the local Education Authorities power analo-

gous to those exercisable by the Board of Trade Advisory Committees. But an important difference appears. The method by which the Board of Trade Committee puts into effect its work of assistance is undefined, and therefore unlimited. The method of assistance used by the Education Authorities, on the other hand, is strictly specified. They are to assist "by means of the collection and the communication of information and the furnishing of advice." With that their powers end. It appears, therefore, that, for instance, a local Education Authority setting up any machinery for actually placing boys in employment would be acting *ultra vires*. They can but inform and advise; and the informed and counselled youth must seek his work through other channels.

All the implications involved in these two Acts were not at once appreciated. But a clash of competing authorities at once ensued. The possible dangers incidental to the establishment of the Labour Exchanges had been at once perceived. It was feared that, with their wide influence and especially with their neutrality as concerns desirable or undesirable work, they might put a premium on employ-



ment of the wrong kind, and give the imprimatur of a Government Department to hasty vocational choice. They might pave a convenient highway into "blind-alleys." Clearly at any rate the enactment of the Choice of Employment Act made some considered adjustment of functions between the Board of Trade and the Board of Education imperative. After a considerable series of pamphlet skirmishes a more or less satisfactory *modus vivendi* was reached. Conference between the two Boards resulted in January, 1911, in agreement on a scheme of adjustment. The principle of co-operation between the Education Authorities and the Board of Trade Labour Exchanges was accepted, and the Board of Education decided to make such co-operation a condition of their approval of proposals from local authorities for the exercise of their new powers. In cases where a satisfactory advisory scheme had been adopted by a local authority, the Board of Trade undertook to accept it in lieu of an Advisory Committee of their own establishment. Where Board of Trade Advisory Committees had already been set up, they would continue; but the

Board undertook to defer the creation of new Committees until the end of the year, unless a local authority should formally resolve not to exercise their powers under the Choice of Employment Act. A tentative demarcation of functions between the two authorities was suggested. The task of advising should be given to the Education Authority, acting, it was proposed, through a special sub-committee, and assisted by industrial information supplied by the Labour Exchange. It was considered desirable that the sub-committee should have as secretary an executive officer to maintain daily contact with the Labour Exchange. In the registration of applications for employment and of vacancies, and in the actual placing of boys and girls in work, there should be close co-operation between Education Authority and Labour Exchange. In greater detail, the scheme contemplated that applicants still at school should register on cards obtained from the school teacher, and passed on by him to the Education Authority's Employment officer. Applications for employment from boys who had left school should, however, be registered by an officer of the Labour Exchange ; but such applicants might

be interviewed and advised by the Education Employment officer. Vacancies for employment notified by employers should be registered at the Labour Exchange, and should be notified by the Exchange officer to the officer of the Education Authority.<sup>1</sup>

This tentative scheme of co-operation does not escape ambiguity. The method by which both the Board of Trade and the Board of Education were to exercise their advisory powers was left undefined. And yet upon the method adopted the practicability of the scheme depends. Unless, for instance, an Education Authority appointed a single executive officer, close co-operation with the Labour Exchange would be manifestly impossible. A sub-committee would be an impossible instrument either for individual advice or individual selection of employment. The constant interchange of information, again, between Education Employment officer and officer of the Labour Exchange, essential to the scheme, is dependent upon their being either in the same building or closely ad-

<sup>1</sup> Memorandum with regard to Co-operation between Labour Exchanges and Local Education Authorities exercising their Powers under the Education (Choice of Employment) Act, 1910. 1911.

jacent. The scheme, according to these and suchlike conditions, is capable of indefinite degrees of efficiency, from a closely co-ordinated process of advice and placing to the loosest relationship between them.

In this position, however, without further attempt at adjustment, the matter was left. Hence arise the varieties of Juvenile Employment Committees and Bureaux as we know them to-day. Where Education Authorities have failed to exercise their powers under the Choice of Employment Act, the Committee, if one exists, is a Committee of the Board of Trade in connection with the Labour Exchange. In 1914 over seventy of these Committees had been set up in the provinces; while Greater London had some seventeen, under the control of a central body—the London Juvenile Advisory Committee. Between fifty and sixty Education Authorities have established advisory schemes, worked in more or less intimate co-operation with the Labour Exchanges. The schemes adopted by some of the larger authorities, following the general lines of the Memorandum of 1911, represent the experiment at its best. The work is under the control of a specially ap-

pointed officer, named a "Supervisor." The whole process of advising and placing is centralized in his office, which is in some building provided by the Education Authority. An officer of the Labour Exchange, appointed by the Board of Trade, is permanently on the staff. Employers' applicants for boys, as well as boys' applications for employment, are registered at the Juvenile Employment Bureau. The Supervisor is intimately in touch with the schools. Particulars of children nearing the age of school exemption are furnished to him. Parents are invited to consult him as to the choice of employment, and to use the Bureau as a means of placing their children in work. Boys under the age of seventeen, besides, out of work, or unsatisfactorily employed, may be advised and re-placed through the Employment Bureau, which thus virtually becomes a Juvenile Labour Exchange. The Labour Exchange itself does not deal with juvenile workers.

In many cases, After-Care Committees of voluntary workers have been established in connection with the Juvenile Employment Bureaux. The aim of these Committees is to exercise a friendly and informal supervision



over boys and girls in the early years of their working life. This ideal is embodied in varying degrees of completeness and wisdom. If the Committee is small, it is able to do little more than investigate cases of peculiar need; and the function of the After-Care worker approximates to that of an emergency visitor. A large Committee, on the other hand, may be able to keep in touch with the average and not merely with those in abnormal circumstances. After-Care work needs clearer definition and firmer organization before it can develop its potential usefulness.

The variety of advisory schemes, and the absence of uniformity in their methods, make it difficult fairly to estimate their success. The ground is not nearly covered. The Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War, in an interim Report in 1916, say that "in twenty county boroughs (some of them large towns with a population over 200,000) and in some 130 smaller towns and large urban districts" no advisory Committees exist. Over a fraction only of the boys leaving school in places where Employment Bureaux exist do they exert any influence. Many never visit the

Bureau at all. Some visit it, not for advice, but merely for a job. Some turn to it only as to a kind of industrial hospital, when they have crippled themselves through their own mistake in seeking work. It is to be feared, too, that some of the Committees lower their ideals, and compromise with the evils they exist to cure. They allow themselves to degenerate into mere registries; and, formally advising against unpromising work, become instrumental in launching boys upon it. The advice is often perfunctory. The Committees do not seem to have reacted for good upon the juvenile working world; because, often failing to maintain a standard, they acquiesce in a vicious demand. They suffer from a lack of uniformity of aim and method, and bear the marks of hasty improvisation and compromise. They are at present in the stage of experiment; but they are not sufficiently co-ordinated to enable the lessons of working experience to be learnt and widely applied.

### III

If Juvenile Employment Committees are to develop their possibilities of usefulness,

they must have a uniform constitution; and they can only become efficient when, re-constituted, definite functions are assigned to the two co-operating Departments, Board of Education and Board of Trade. The logic of the matter, and the experience of the most successful Committees, combine to make clear what this constitution should be. The Education Authority has had the care of the boy up to the moment of his leaving school. It has prepared him for the working world, and dismisses him into it. It holds the record of his fitness and ability. Under the new Education Act, he will remain until the age of eighteen under educational control. The Education Authority, then, is the authority with which the scheme of vocational guidance should originate, and by which it should be controlled. To hand the boy over at the outset of his industrial life to the guidance of another authority is to break that continuity in his life which it is one of the main purposes of a scheme of guidance into work to maintain. On the other hand, the Board of Trade, through its Labour Exchanges, or Employment Exchanges, is in touch with the industrial world. Its officers are acquainted

with the state and the needs of local industries. The functions of the Labour Exchanges in relation to boy-labour, as in relation to adult labour, are clearly defined. They are, as they are named, *Exchanges*—places where the demand of employers for labour, and of labour for employment, may be satisfied. In a scheme of Juvenile Advisory Committees, originating with the Education Authority, they fall naturally into their place. They renounce the work of advising, which is foreign to them; but offer to the Committee their knowledge of the industrial world, and the demands for juvenile work which are notified to them. This is the logic of the matter; and it is also the arrangement which experience has justified. The most successful advisory schemes are those which, set up by the Education Authority, are affiliated for the work of registration and placing with the local Labour Exchange.

This, therefore, would seem to be the constitution upon which Juvenile Employment Committees would most simply and efficiently be built. It would mean beginning anew from the point at which these Committees were created by the Labour Exchanges Act

and the Choice of Employment Act. The sections of the former Act which empower the Board of Trade Advisory Committees to be set up, should be repealed; and the Choice of Employment Act so amended as to embody this natural co-operation between the Board of Education and the Board of Trade. The Act should define the functions and methods of the Committees; and their establishment by local Education Authorities should be made compulsory.

#### IV

We may now attempt to sketch the method on which the Committees might most efficiently do their work. "Committees" we have called them, adopting the term used in the two Acts which established them. But, in fact, they should be rather Juvenile Advisory and Employment Bureaux. In this there is more than a verbal distinction. It was contemplated apparently both in the Labour Exchanges Act and in the Choice of Employment Act that the work of advice should actually be done by Committees. But an effective scheme cannot be carried out



on these lines. Rota Committees, meeting occasionally, are not fitted for the task. The most that such Committees can do is to offer general advice. But general advice is not the need. The purpose of the Employment Bureau is to start a boy on the work for which he is best fitted. This involves individual dealing, and discrimination in examination and choice. Committees of voluntary workers will find their place in the scheme; but their place is not in this work of advising and vocational choice. The Advisory Bureau should be under the control of a single officer, appointed by the Education Authority, and devoting his whole time to the work. He should be assisted by a clerical staff, for there is much routine work to be done; and the Supervisor should not be diverted by it from his most important duty of advising and choosing employment. In the areas of the larger authorities it will probably also be found necessary to associate with the Supervisor competent assistants in the task of interviewing and advising; but if this work is done, as it ought to be done, on a clearly designed method, it will not be as difficult as it might appear to find suitable

men to do it. The Board of Trade should further appoint an officer and staff whose functions will be to keep in touch with the industrial world, to collect and tabulate industrial information, and to register applications from employers of juvenile labour. These officers will manage the "Placing" Department of the Bureau. The Bureau should be situated in central premises, distinct from the Labour Exchange. It might find quarters in the Education Offices. In large areas, at any rate, the scheme would need a certain amount of decentralization. A single central Advisory Bureau would manifestly be insufficient, for instance, for London, or for the other large cities; but the decentralization would need only to be partial. It would mean chiefly provision for facilities of advice in the districts or suburbs. This might be done either by the appointment of district officers, or, probably better, by a system of visits by officers of the central Bureau to the districts.

The business of choosing work should in a measure have begun even before a boy has left the elementary school; and the process, begun at school, should be continued

and completed by the Employment Bureau. During his last year of schooling a boy probably thinks a good deal about the coming change. It is perhaps truer to say that the thing is often in his mind; for his thoughts are formless and fitful. The reasons which lead him to look with favour upon this career or that have not much more substance than the fancies of his earlier childhood, when he wished to drive an engine, because he was fascinated with the "works," or to keep shop, because he was intrigued by the little drawers or the bottles or the canisters from which the shop-keeper dispensed his wares. It is some outstanding, and probably quite secondary incident of the employment favoured at the moment which attracts him. But certainly at the age of twelve or thirteen he is in the mood to think of what he is going to do in the world; and he is in a better state of mind for careful choice than he will be a year later when the change is actually upon him. For one thing, he is not, as he will be then, all agog to get out to work. This is the school's opportunity—an opportunity which at present is never seized. If it is to be used, it must be used in two direc-

tions. The boy himself must be helped to "make up his mind"; and in the guided process of making up his mind the teacher should be alert to detect signs of aptitude and bent, which may help in the direction of the final choice. To this double end, some simple means may be suggested.

During this last year of school-life the boys should be given, in the regular course of schooling, some instruction in the industrial openings available in their locality. This teaching should be made as interesting and vivid as may be. It should be made alive by being definitely related with the adventure of becoming a worker to which the boy is looking forward. The instruction may be given in many ways. The late Mr. Charles E. B. Russell made an admirable suggestion in the Memorandum which he contributed to Mr. Cyril Jackson's Report on Boy-Labour.

"To arouse a boy's interest in the choice of employment," he wrote, "a school reading book might be devised for use in the sixth standard. This should give in simple language particulars of the various trades, how to enter them, the terms of apprenticeship, rates of wages, adult outlook, etc. A book of this sort would link the school with the practical realities of life, and incidentally teach its

readers that books do sometimes contain useful and interesting matter. The description of some trade would call forth any natural bent which a boy might have towards it, and his teachers would encourage him to express his inclinations with a view to work of the nature which attracted him being provided when the time for leaving school arrived.”<sup>1</sup>

Such school reading might be supplemented by occasional lectures illustrated by lantern views; and the ever-popular kinematograph might be turned to account. Elder boys might be taken to see the work of trades in operation. Modern industry is full of latent romance to which a boy's mind, with its delight in seeing things made, and in the mysteries of machinery, is very susceptible. It would be well for some of the vocational lectures to be opened to the parents. The result of this, continued during the final year of schooling, would be that the boy, at school-leaving age, even if he had not

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Boy-Labour*, p. 158. Messrs. George Philip & Son, Ltd., published a quite excellent series of penny handbooks (the “What to Be” series) dealing with different trades. Unfortunately these are out of print: the demand was not sufficient to keep them alive. The material contained in these booklets, each one of which was written by a man engaged on the trade of which he wrote, would, with some slight alterations, make a very suitable class reading book such as Mr. Russell proposed.



made up his mind as to the kind of work he proposed to enter, would have a map of the working world, and have learnt a practical way of finding his place in it.

Meanwhile, during the concluding year especially, and indeed from the age of twelve, the teacher should be alertly observant for indications of the boy's natural bent, revealed in the daily work of school. These should be systematically noted. The observation of the teacher would be directed and concentrated by the provision of a printed record form, arranged under distinctive headings. A month or six weeks before a boy was due to leave school, this school record, together with the medical officer's report, would be sent to the Supervisor of the Juvenile Advisory Bureau. An appointment would be made to see the boy at the Bureau; and this visit should be made in school hours, and as a regular incident of school routine. It would, of course, not commit parents or boy to follow the advice given at the Bureau, or to enter work through its agency; but there is no reason why every boy on the point of leaving school should not be required, as a matter of course, to be examined by the

Employment Supervisor, as he is required, in the natural course, to be examined by the school doctor.

This preliminary interview would be for advice. Whether it led to actual placing in employment would depend upon circumstances. With the data of the school report before him, the Supervisor would try to diagnose the boy's fitness for employment. Various tests, psychological or physiological, to determine a boy's probable industrial aptitude have been devised, and are used, in America. They seem more ingenious than dependable; and some of them are reminiscent of the empiricism of the phrenologist or the physiognomist. They aim at providing a rapid test, applicable at a single interview by one who has no previous knowledge of the candidate. The Supervisor, furnished with completer information, will have no occasion to use them. But the search for means to systematize diagnosis of vocational fitness, so that in the choice of work there may be a *good fit*, which has produced these American devices, sets an example which we should do well to follow in this country. If the advice given to the boy and his parents is to be serviceable, it

must be precise, and be founded upon alert examination of the boy's capacities for industry. The boy should be questioned as to his own wishes about employment. In order that this questioning may be direct and definite, and be saved from discursiveness and irrelevance, there should be drawn up for use at the interview a set of leading questions. But the questions, while kept steadily in mind, and serving as a guide to the conversation, should not be asked seriatim and formally. The information which it is sought to elicit should be brought out as naturally as possible; and the boy should be allowed to express himself with freedom. The manner in which he answers the questions, the points in them which especially stir his interest, the readiness with which he comprehends the bearing of what is being asked, will all become, if the Supervisor is skilled and sympathetic, so many indications of intelligence and mental character; while the *obiter dicta* which in this informal examination he is allowed to let fall will often be useful guides to the questioner. If the boy has already formed some opinion as to the kind of work he would prefer, his reasons for this

choice should be ascertained, and his preference be noted. So far, but hardly farther, will the matter go at this preliminary interview.

The Supervisor is left with his notes of the conversation. The next step is to fit this observed capacity into the kind of work which demands the aptitude possessed by the boy. The Supervisor turns from his data concerning the boy to his data concerning industrial openings. The investigations of the Board of Trade staff will have furnished him with classified information about local industries. This information should be set out in detail for each kind of occupation into which boys may be sent; and besides particulars of prospects, wages, and method of entry, should include an estimate of the capacities required for success in it. This industrial data should further be summarized under distinctive headings indicating mental and physical qualities demanded; so that the Supervisor, after interviewing a boy, may be able at a glance to eliminate certain occupations for which the candidate is clearly unfitted, and to make choice among others for which he seems suited. When he has determined what kind of work will be the aptest fit for the boy he

has been examining, he has reached the conclusion to which this preliminary inquiry has been leading.

The difficulties of such an examination when the ideal is that it should be made available for every boy leaving the Elementary Schools, are obvious. It will be objected that a larger advisory staff will be required than can be provided. This difficulty, however, may easily be exaggerated. In the Advisory Bureaux of the larger educational areas trained advisory officers, besides the Supervisor, will no doubt be needed; but in such areas the whole organization will necessarily be on a large scale, and the authority will be able to afford to maintain it. In proportion, too, as the examination is reduced to method, the time expended on it will be shortened, and the number of boys coming for examination at any one time will not be excessive, though the provision of the new Education Act that actual school-exemption should synchronize with the end of the term following a boy's fourteenth birthday will increase the congestion. A more formidable difficulty would be to decide as to the vocational destination of boys who show no very decided bent in a



particular direction, so that they might, as far as *a priori* considerations can show, be equally well placed in any one of several occupations. In such cases other factors—circumstances, availability of openings, and minor matters of preference—would need to be considered, and the examination would thus be complicated. In some cases the result of the first interview would be little more than the elimination of manifestly unsuitable kinds of work. But, whatever the difficulties, such general vocational choice at the outset is essential to the scheme.

A report of this preliminary industrial examination will next be sent by the Advisory Bureau to the parents. It will set out with precision the conclusion which has been reached as to the fittest employment for the boy, and the reasons for it. If his aptitude has been found to point to a particular trade, or other kind of work, particulars of that occupation will be enclosed. The official information compiled by the Board of Trade for the guidance of the Supervisor should, reduced to a concise and popular form, be printed as leaflets on specific trades, which may, in this way, be distributed to the parents.

With the report should be sent a reply postcard. The parents should be asked to state on this card if the kind of work suggested is what they desire for their boy; if not, what other they prefer: and if they wish the Advisory Bureau to try to place him in that employment. They should be invited to call at the Bureau for further information or advice. If they decide that the boy shall enter the kind of work recommended, and wish the Bureau to find him a place, his name will be entered on the Register of the Board of Trade "Placement" Department; and it will become the concern of the officer in charge to start him, when the time arrives, on work. It will be his business to decide as to the best available firms and to complete the engagement: but he will not, without sanction from the Supervisor, launch the boy upon a kind of work different from that which has been judged most suitable.

If the Advisory Bureaux were established throughout the country, and every boy before leaving school were interviewed for vocational advice in the way that has been sketched, a very large proportion of parents would probably respond to the invitation, and use

the Bureau for the placing of their boys. The present indifference of many parents to the opportunities of the Advisory Committees arises from causes which a more systematic scheme would remove. The Committees, especially if they are Committees of the Board of Trade, fail to get into immediate touch with children on the point of leaving school. They do not take their place in the school system; and the mere advertising of their existence does not suffice. But still, under the most efficient scheme, many parents will doubtless be unwilling to use it. The Bureau will need some means of getting into touch with these parents. A failure to reply to the preliminary inquiry should not be allowed to end the matter. Nor would a "follow-up" letter, after the manner of commercial advertisers, suffice. Visitation is the only means of following up the Bureau's report; and in this work voluntary workers may well be enlisted.

There arises now the difficult question of how the Advisory Bureaux should deal with the less promising kinds of work. Boys will continue to be sent into "blind-alley" occupations. Is the Bureau to refuse under any

circumstances to recruit them from their applicants, and to recognize only progressive and regular kinds of employment? For this position there is something to be said. If the Bureaux place boys only in promising work, they set up an ideal which, in proportion as they become the normal avenues into employment, will have an important educational influence on boys, parents, and employers. On the other hand, if they ignore the less promising kinds of work, a large number of boys will pass from their ken, and be quite untouched by their influence. They would surrender the victims of undesirable work to their fate.

A compromise may be suggested. The ideal of launching boys upon really educative and progressive work should be kept steadily before the officers of the Bureau. Constant effort should be made to get in touch with employers of this kind of work; and by careful selection of boys to fill the vacancies they notify to the Bureau, they should be led to realize the advantages of doing so. Good industrial openings at the disposal of the Bureau would thus be increased. At the same time the Bureau would make careful

inquiry as to the conditions and prospects of less promising kinds of work, both as a whole and in the case of individual employers. Some of these kinds of work will be found capable of development in the direction of improved prospects and training. They should in these respects be graded and classified. Certain employments will be found to be unnecessary and unserviceable, and in their conditions harmful. Certain employers will be found to be callous exploiters of boy-labour. Such unnecessary or hurtful occupations and such bad employers may have to be put on a "black list," and boys in no circumstances should be sent to them from the Bureau. But the Bureau will try to bring itself into communication with the best of the less regular occupations, and with the best employers. Boys will be sent only to these employments after careful inquiry, and will be sent as far as possible to the work for which they are best fitted. In this way the Bureaux would, in course of time, react for good upon these less determinate kinds of work, would help to develop their possibilities of prospect and training, and to establish a better standard of employment. In some cases—because of



a lack of openings in the chosen kind of employment, or difficulty in waiting for them—boys may have to be sent for a time to some work which does not offer prospect of continuance. But when this is done, it should be understood at the outset that the employment is definitely temporary, and better openings into which the boy may be drafted should be sought. All temptation to gauge success by the number of placings should be removed from the Bureaux.

The work of the Advisory Bureaux will not end with the first placing of the boy in employment. They will take their place as the regular Labour Exchanges for juvenile workers up to the age of eighteen; but, just as their care for the boy on leaving school was essentially advisory and educational, so will it continue to be. They must not fall, when dealing with older boys, into the position of mere employment Registries. The ideal is that the Advisory Bureaux should become not only the recognized means of placing boys in work, but the recognized means also of guiding and helping them when they are employed. To this end ways must be found, probably most successfully through voluntary

helpers, of keeping in touch with each boy after he has been launched upon work. In the offices of some of the existing Board of Trade Advisory Committees one's eye is startled by the sight of files alarmingly labelled *Dead Boys*. They are, of course, files containing the record cards of boys who, having been placed in employment, have passed from the care of the Committee. In the ideal Advisory Bureau there should be no "Dead Boys." Periodical reports of their progress should be made. A boy should be encouraged to seek the advice of the Bureau in the small jarrings and discontents, and in the real perplexities, which are certain to come. If, after a period of probation, work is found unsuitable, or the boy unfitted for it, in the one event he, or in the other the employer, should be invited to apply to the Bureau for a change. Dismissed, or relinquishing his employment, the lad should naturally turn to the Bureau for a fresh start; and the problems arising from such change should be dealt with completely and thoroughly.

The success of the supervising work of the Advisory Bureaux will depend in large measure upon the co-operation and organization of

voluntary help. After-Care Committees, as we have seen, have already in many places been established in connection with the Juvenile Employment Committees. Their weakness, speaking generally, is a certain lack of definition in their functions. Their danger is the futility which comes from the offering of general advice by persons without qualification to advise with precision. The first step towards the utilization of voluntary help is demarcation of the work which volunteer helpers can do. In the scheme that has been sketched it is evident that such help can usefully be enlisted in several directions. Unofficial visitors would probably be the best agents for inducing indifferent or hesitating parents to follow the advice of the Bureau, and to seek its help in starting their boys on work. It would be unnecessary for them to possess any detailed knowledge of industry. Their qualifications would be tact and courtesy and the capacity to insist persuasively on the help the Bureau was capable of giving. The work again of visiting the homes of boys whose home conditions create peculiar difficulties in placing them in work might be committed to a special sub-committee of

voluntary workers, who would need greater experience and knowledge. Besides this, work would be found for a large number of helpers in the task of keeping in touch with boys already in employment. In this important service the fullest use should be made of the experience of scoutmasters, captains of brigades, secretaries of lads' clubs and of others who, in various kinds of recreative work with boys, have gained their confidence. Indeed it might generally be possible to make these organizations the chief means of keeping in contact with working boys; and their officers might meet periodically with the Supervisor of the Advisory Bureau for conference.

The full usefulness of Advisory Bureaux established on the lines which have been indicated will only become effective when they are supported from the side of education by improved elementary schooling and by continued education in the daytime, and from the side of industry by the development of the probationary and training possibilities of work, and by improved conditions. Their scope will be widened and their methods in some degree modified by these correlative

reforms. But in bringing these reforms about the Bureaux themselves should bear an influential part. Giving to boys and parents a truer valuation of work, and teaching them the elements of wise vocational choice, they will regulate the supply of boy-labour, and, accentuating the demand for prospect and training, will stimulate the development of these factors in juvenile industry. They will become, besides, storehouses of industrial information; and in their records those who work to reform juvenile labour will find material for their conclusions and recommendations far wider and more representative than any which can be collected in evidence by Parliamentary Committees and inquiries.



## CHAPTER V

### THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

#### I

MANY of the difficulties which meet a boy on his entrance upon industry are often laid to the charge of imperfect preparation in school; and the vague discontent with elementary education felt by employers, parents, and "the man in the street," is more precisely expressed by educationalists. The Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools devoted a chapter of their Report to the Necessity for better Educational Foundation in the Day School; and the Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War hesitated to advocate a higher school exemption age than fourteen because, among other reasons, they believed "that many schools still require a good deal

of organization before they can be regarded as wholly satisfactory even for children between twelve and fourteen." There is, in fact, a strong consensus of opinion that elementary education stands in need of reform, and the points of criticism show a rather remarkable unanimity. In brief, the indictment falls under three counts. It is said that education is not sufficiently "practical," and that the teaching is "too academic." It is said that the curriculum is too large and too literary. And it is said that the schools fail to develop intelligence and initiative; and that there is too much teaching by rule of thumb, and too much learning by rote. "It must not be supposed," wrote Mr. Cyril Jackson in his Report on Boy-Labour to the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, "that the present education given in the schools is all that can be desired. There is a widespread feeling that it is too academic and must be made more practical. In any case, it must aim at developing character and intelligence rather than merely imparting book knowledge."<sup>1</sup> This opinion was corroborated by many witnesses who appeared before the Commission.

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Boy-Labour*, p. 30.

The Majority therefore recommended that "the education in our elementary schools should be made less literary and more practical, and better calculated than at present to adapt the child to its future occupation."<sup>1</sup> The Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools, though more guardedly, concur in this criticism. "Many boys and girls leave the day school with little more than a smattering of real education," "even what they have learned is often of an academic rather than a practical nature," and the curriculum is often "inappropriate."<sup>2</sup>

These criticisms obviously need closer definition. They are themselves open to the charge of being "academic," and are certainly indefinite. The age of fourteen is the utmost age to which children remain in the primary school. The possibilities of elementary education are therefore conditioned by the capacity of the average child under that age. By some critics this necessary limitation seems to be ignored or misunderstood. Take, for instance, the complaint that the schools fail

<sup>1</sup> *Majority Report of Poor Law Commission*, p. 440, II (6); cp. p. 409, 553.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of Consultative Committee*, pp. 51 ff.

to develop intelligence and initiative. This is a common complaint. It is stated in terms by Mr. Cyril Jackson and endorsed by witnesses before the Poor Law Commission; it is implicit in the more guarded strictures of the Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools. It may be taken to summarize the typical criticism of "the man in the street." Too little demand is made upon reflection and individual resource. The boy leaves school with a certain amount of formal knowledge, crystallized and memorized, which he is unable to turn to account. He has no grasp of principles, and his knowledge is therefore unadaptable—an apparatus which he cannot use. But this is rather a statement of the average mental potentiality of a young boy than a fair criticism of elementary education. For the age of fourteen is that at which the capacity for reflection and reasoning normally begins to awake. "Intelligence" in a boy of fourteen is not an intellectual process of deduction from premisses: it is rather an alertness of mind enabling him to observe, to remember, and to use observation and memory in the performance of work which he has been taught to do. That the elemen-

tary school should develop intelligence in this sense is, of course, true. If it fails to do so—as no doubt it often does—the criticism is relevant and serious. But education cannot develop a kind of intelligence which lies beyond reach of the age-capacity of the children with whom it deals. One cannot, in fine, put old heads on young shoulders.

When again, it is said that elementary education is not sufficiently “practical,” and that it fails as a preparation for working life, we need to ask in what sense the term “practical” is used, and in what sense it is contemplated that elementary education should, or can, be a preparation for industry? It cannot be meant that in the elementary school there should be craft-training, or that it should prepare the boys for work by teaching them the elements of trade-skill. The plea that the schools should be more “practical” appears to be merely the plea, otherwise expressed, that they should develop intelligence. Thus, to store a child’s memory with facts on whatever subject without calling into play the faculties which he is capable of exercising, is to teach unpractically. It is the method of the pedant who values



“information” because it *is* information, and apart from its serviceableness or importance. Practical teaching is that which, on whatever material of instruction, calling into action a boy’s natural powers, strengthens and develops them by use. The curriculum, therefore, is of less importance than the method of teaching. The gravamen of criticism rests rather upon the way in which the schools educate than upon the subjects with which they deal: though, if it be true, as many suppose, that too many subjects are included, the criticism is important, because it has a vital bearing on the efficiency of the teaching itself. The temptation to cram and overload the memory increases with the increase of subjects which find place on the time-table. The question resolves itself into one of applied psychology. What response to education is the child of school age capable of giving, and how can that response be best evoked? These are questions for the educational expert; and it may even be presumptuous for any other to try to answer them. One may, however, suggest, by way of illustration, some means by which the ideal may be approached.

## II

When the boy enters school he is in the earliest stage of childhood. Psychologists tell us that about the age of eight begins a period of growth, distinct from early childhood and from youth. It extends from eight to twelve. It is the fittest time for "drill"—in formal teaching, for memory work; in development, for acquiring automatic adroitness. "Never again," writes Dr. Stanley Hall, "will there be such susceptibility to drill and discipline, such plasticity to habituation, or such ready adjustment to new conditions. It is the age of external and mechanical training. Reading, writing, drawing, manual training, musical technique, foreign tongues and their pronunciation, the manipulation of numbers and of geometrical elements, and many kinds of skill, have now their golden hour; and if it passes unimproved all these can never be acquired later without a heavy handicap of disadvantage and loss."<sup>1</sup> Seven out of the nine years, then, which the boy spends at the elementary school are years in which he is either preparing for, or living

<sup>1</sup> *Youth*, pp. 4, 5,

through, this period of "drill." The fact indicates vividly the limitations imposed upon elementary education. Elementary knowledge—as of reading, writing, and arithmetic—must be acquired during these years. Formal instruction and formal discipline *must* be the methods employed, because they are the only methods applicable to this period. It is useless to carp at what is a natural necessity. The only question is how these methods can be best applied to the development of the child, and not merely to the furnishing of his memory.

The Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools laid emphasis on the need of increased manual training in the schools. It was the one suggestion which they made for the improvement of the school curriculum, in their opinion often "inappropriate." They "strongly held" the view that "within certain age limits the brain development of children is better secured if their hands are brought into play than if they are wholly confined to book instruction," and they considered that "the one outstanding fact is the need for more handwork in the curriculum."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools*, pp. 51 ff.

This is an excellent illustration of the plea that education should be made more "practical," when the term is used precisely. Manual training is of value, not as a preparation of boys for the manual trades, but as an instrument of education. It is an instrument fitted to be used progressively in adaptation to the development of boys in the earlier and in the later stages. The earlier stage gives opportunity for the acquirement of manual dexterity. In the later stage—from twelve to fourteen—at the time when the boy's capacity for relating and applying knowledge is growing, the work would require the adaptation of rules and facilities, learned in the earlier years, to new conditions.

But there is no reason why the same principle should not be applied to "literary" education. Indeed, unless it can be applied to it, it will have comparatively little value in relation to handwork; for the schools must in any case be largely occupied with "bookish" instruction. The foundation of this instruction is reading, writing, and arithmetic. When a boy has learned "to read," in the sense of spelling words, and "to write" in the sense of tracing signs, the

exercise of these accomplishments may be made as "practical"—that is, as educational—as manual work.

Having learnt "to read," a boy often becomes an extensive reader. A new world has been opened to him, and he makes haste to explore it. It may perhaps be said with justice that the elementary school does not wisely direct this new faculty of reading and this new desire to practise it; and thereby misses an opportunity the significance of which can hardly be exaggerated. Boys are apparently still required to memorize "Elegant Extracts," which can have small interest or meaning for them. Reflective poetry can find but slight response in a boy's mind; and the isolation of notable passages, rent from their context, robs the reading of the dramatic interest without which, to the boy, literature is dead. If his reading is to be educational, it must renounce "Elegant Extracts," and the excursions into literature to which he is led must have a destination. A story grips him, and he is not without dramatic sense. His imagination, for instance, will take fire from the story of a Shakespeare play, and he can, with his class-mates, enact

a Shakespearean scene. Incidentally, he will get the famous passages into his memory, and learn to speak them with emphasis and meaning. But Mark Antony's Oration over Cæsar's body, as an isolated exercise in rhetoric, or a soliloquy of Hamlet, as "a piece of poetry," will leave his interest cold. Educationally (at this age) they are valueless; and if they are made the vehicle of grammatical riddles they become hateful. In narrative poetry, romance, fiction, travels, the story of discovery and invention, there is abounding material for reading, formally in school, and under guidance out of school, which, developing taste as far as age allows, and even some literary discrimination, may link a boy's normal interests with his school tasks. "Reading," indeed, might be made to include almost all the "subjects,"—History, Geography, Science—which jostle for place in the curriculum; and they should be interrelated. The boy's mind would not become a storage cupboard, with strictly divided compartments, for the keeping of this or that commodity of "information." And when he set out to explore for himself in the world of books—and to incite to such exploration is a main



aim of mental education—he would carry a chart and a compass.

In relation with this teaching by guided reading, much use might be made educationally of a boy's hobbies, and conspicuously of the passion for "collecting" which seems to be common to almost all.<sup>1</sup> Supervision of collecting would teach order and arrangement and the relation of ideas, while the collections themselves—of postage stamps, for instance, or leaves, or flowers—might be made a natural basis for lessons in geography, in the history and modes of government of foreign countries, or in botany. The teacher needs an "association" for his teaching in the boy's mind: here it is, ready made and living. Boys also are interested, in their way, in current events. They read the newspapers. They might be encouraged to keep scrap albums and to paste into them newspaper cuttings, classified under certain heads, suggested by the teacher. Could there be a more apt starting-point for lessons in contemporary history, or in what we have learned from America to call "Civics"?

<sup>1</sup> *The Mental and Physical Life of School Children*, Peter Sandiford, pp. 231, 232.

“English Composition” takes its place in the time-table of the elementary school. It does not seem to be made as efficient an instrument of education as it might be. If a boy cannot be taught to be a stylist, he might at least learn to begin his theme at the beginning, and not at the point on which his mind chances to be fixed when he takes up his pen ; to use only words whose meaning he understands, and to use them accurately ; and to bring one sentence to an end before embarking upon another. The average school “composition” shows failure in these respects. The true point of departure is not found ; words are confusedly used ; and sentences evaporate before reaching a conclusion. Now, these are rather faults than natural shortcomings, and they proceed from imperfect teaching. A lesson in English composition might be at least as practical, and possess at least as much training value, as a lesson in carpentry. This largely depends upon the subjects chosen. One may venture the suggestion that a boy’s composition should almost always be the record of some piece of observation or experience, essentially concrete. It should test and develop accuracy of observa-

tion, memory, and statement. He has been, say, to a museum, or has been shown through a factory. He is to describe what he has seen. He is taught to choose and arrange his material, to recall his experience, and to write it in the words which seem to him most clearly and truthfully to describe it. It is not enough that he should do this once only. The subject of composition need not be changed with every lesson. Rather, the boy should be given back the composition which he has produced, be told its faults, and bidden to revise it. He makes progress in lucidity of thought and expression. He learns to use the tools of language.

These illustrations—they profess to be nothing more—may serve to indicate lines along which reform in the teaching of the elementary schools might travel. The problem is one of method; and the method after which the schools are feeling is one which, imparting the necessary elementary knowledge with which they must be largely occupied, does so in such a way as, at the same time, to stimulate and develop the intelligence of the children. It corrects a tendency to be pre-occupied with “subjects”

at the expense of training, and to subserve education to instruction. It is in the two concluding years of school life—from twelve to fourteen—that education has its opportunity. It is a short opportunity, and a partial one. The most perhaps that the primary school can hope to do is so to train a boy's growing faculties, and to direct his awakening curiosity, as to fit and incline him to continue his education.

### III

The criticisms of elementary education which are so glibly made contemplate ideal conditions of schooling, and ignore the weight of difficulty and hindrance under which the primary schools have from the beginning laboured. Of these, child-labour and the variability of the school-leaving age have been the most constant and the heaviest. These two hindrances are now at long last to be removed, or at least greatly to be eased, by the provisions of the new Education Act. The half-time system, which has sturdily withstood many assaults, and has, through years, strategically retired

from one line of defence to another, has received its death-blow. The schools will be relieved of the chronic dislocation of organization which it brought. The children will no longer be distracted by the rival claims of learning and working, nor suffer from the stunting of mind and body which the system inflicted. The evils of labour out of school hours, sporadically and imperfectly checked by the Employment of Children Act, 1903, will probably in the main be removed by the stringent restrictions of the new Act. The employment of any child under the age of twelve is prohibited. The Act forbids the employment of a child of twelve or upwards on any day on which he is required to attend school, before the close of school hours on that day, and his employment on any day before six in the morning or after eight in the evening. No child under the age of twelve is to be engaged in street-trading.<sup>1</sup> The enforcement of these provisions is in the hands of the Education Authorities.

The variability of the school-leaving age, according to local by-laws, indefensible on grounds of reason or expediency, made it

<sup>1</sup> Education Act, 1918, Sec. 13 (1) (i) (ii).

futile to design an educational course progressively adapted to the capacity of primary school pupils. It was estimated by the Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War that some fifty per cent. only of the children attending public full-time day schools remained at school until the age of fourteen.<sup>1</sup> The Education Act provides that no exemption from school shall be granted before that age.<sup>2</sup> Local education authorities may by by-law raise the exemption age to fifteen, either generally, "or for children of a particular sex, or for children not employed in any specified occupations." This provision commends itself, not so much on account of the precise age chosen for school-exemption, as because it will introduce uniformity and do away with the illogical and harassing diversities of local by-laws. No industry requires or habitually engages the labour of boys at an earlier age than fourteen. The only possible exception is agriculture; but most of the agricultural witnesses before the Departmental Committee on Education After the War were

<sup>1</sup> Report, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Education Act*, 1918, Sec. 8 (1).



opposed to differential treatment, giving an earlier exemption age in rural than in urban districts.<sup>1</sup> Nor can there be serious quarrel with the refusal to admit earlier individual exemptions. Unless a strong case can be made out for such exemptions, they should be abandoned in the interest, not only of the children, but of the whole construction of elementary education. Exemptions would neutralize the advantage gained for school organization by a uniform leaving age. The sole ground on which exemption earlier than at the statutory age can be plausibly pleaded in individual cases is that of parental need; and on this the Departmental Committee seem to say the final word. "We are aware," they write, "that there are cases in which it may be thought a hardship that children who are capable of earning, and whose earnings would just make the difference between insufficiency and sufficiency in the home, should be restrained from earning. Whatever may be the right remedy in such cases, we feel very clearly that it is not the curtailment of education for just those children who stand most in need of education." They

<sup>1</sup> Report, Sec. 13.

point out that local education authorities possess powers under Section II of the Education (Administrative Provisions) Act, 1907, to provide bursaries for scholars in public elementary schools from the age of twelve upwards.<sup>1</sup>

It is further provided in the Education Act that the time of leaving school should synchronize with the end of the term during which a boy reaches his fourteenth birthday. This will doubtless help the smooth working of the upper standards. It seems, however, probable that it will create, especially in large towns, a difficulty in placing boys in work. The supply of candidates for employment will be concentrated in certain periods of the year. The Employment Bureaux may find themselves overwhelmed with applicants at these times. There will be hurried competition for the best openings; the supply may exceed the immediate demand, and boys will either be kept waiting for suitable openings or will be diverted into less desirable kinds of work. Employers will be inconvenienced. The demand for exemption on behalf of a boy of fourteen who had the opportunity

<sup>1</sup> Report, Sec. 17.

of suitable employment, which delay would lose him, might become too insistent to be resisted. The gain to the school would hardly balance these inconveniences and the irritation they would cause. A modification of the rule, by which a boy was released from school after attaining his fourteenth birthday, if he had promise of suitable employment, might meet the difficulty.

The restriction of child-labour, and the standardization of the school-leaving age, will clear two formidable and ancient difficulties from the path of primary education. A sadder evil remains with which no educational legislation alone can cope. A large proportion of the scholars are physically ailing. In his Annual Report for the year 1915, the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education writes:—

Not less than a quarter of a million children of school age are seriously crippled, invalided or disabled: not less than a million children of school age are so physically or mentally defective or diseased as to be unable to derive reasonable benefit from the education which the State provides.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report, 1915, of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, Cd. 8338, 1916, p. v.

It is probable that "not less than ten per cent. of the children in public elementary schools are suffering from malnutrition." It is not produced alone by insufficiency or unsuitableness of food. "Lack of sleep, habit of life, evil environment, premature employment, and disease, are also factors in its production."<sup>1</sup>

The elementary school, in short, is assailed by the combined forces working upon the children of all the social evils of modern life; and the elementary school has to solve, or palliate, as best it may, the social problems that result. In the elementary schools are concentrated the most necessitous and the most ailing children of the nation. They are to be cared for and taught side by side with those who, coming from good home nurture, sturdy and unspoilt in mind and body, probably represent what is most healthy in national life.

At this point, as with the hindrances caused by child-labour, the work of the school needs support from social reform. The problems of the school are sharpened in

<sup>1</sup> *Annual Report, 1915, of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education*, Cd. 8338, 1916, p. 32.

the home. They meet the problems of housing, sanitation, adult unemployment, inadequately paid adult labour, as well as those which arise from ignorance, thriftlessness, cruelty and intemperance—themselves, in many cases, reactions from bad social and economic conditions. What, in these respects, can be achieved by educational machinery alone—by the more scientific work of teachers, by the school medical service, by the feeding of necessitous children, by physical exercises—can be, in themselves, palliatives only. The preventable diseases and defects of which Sir George Newman writes are present in many cases when the child enters school. “Disease and defect in entrants aged three to six years can only mean that the seeds of disease have been sown in the bodies of these children before they came to school; this raises the question of unhealthy maternity, unhealthy infancy, or undesirable conditions of home life.”<sup>1</sup>

Over these things the school has no control. Such defects in the eight-year-olds and in the leavers may, Sir George Newman con-

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education 1915*, p. v.

siders, "arise from pre-school conditions or from injurious influences at school," and "if the leaving child is unfit for employment and citizenship, the system of its education stands, in greater or less measure, condemned." But it is impossible to assign a just measure of blame. The most that school-organization can do is, by extended school medical service, by adopting more completely measures of cure as well as of diagnosis, and by care of the child while at school, to counteract, as far as may be, evil influences without, and to determine with more precision wherein the causes of disease and defect are to be found. But the school, when all that lies within its power is done, will still be looking wistfully to the wider reform which may present it at the start with children in the fittest condition, and guard them from harm.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE CONTINUATION SCHOOL

#### I

ELEMENTARY education has up to the present time been a mere episode in the life of the working boy, and an episode imperfectly related with its context. In its nature it could not be a specific preparation for work. Neither, in fact, was it, for the vast majority, the preparation for continued education. At the moment when he was ripe for education in its true sense, the boy ceased to attend school. The State, which had guided, tended and taught him from the age of five to the age of fourteen, abandoned him to chance, to the exploitation of the working world, to the scarcely veiled contempt for education which was the temper of his home and of those who employed him. Such education

as was offered in evening schools was not an integral part of his life or work: it was rather apologetically superimposed,—an after-thought, a counsel of perfection for the very studious youth, tolerated or mildly encouraged by parent and employer. It was offered in competition with the claims of his leisure, at times when he was physically and mentally least fitted to receive its benefits, at times when their late hours of work made it impossible for a large number of boys, with the best will in the world, to attend. The work of the elementary school was thus suspended in a void. The majority of boys, passing from the day school, passed at the same time from any sort of educational guidance and control. The Consultative Committee on Continuation Schools estimated that of the two million boys and girls between fourteen and seventeen in England and Wales, one million and a half were untouched by Continued Education. Of these about 750,000 were boys.<sup>1</sup> The Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War wrote :—

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Consultative Committee*, vol. i, pp. 27, 28.

In 1911-12 there were about 2,700,000 juveniles between 14 and 18, and of these about 2,200,000, or 81·5 per cent., were enrolled neither in Day Schools nor in Evening Schools.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, of those who were enrolled in Evening Schools, many discontinued attendance after a short time, many attended irregularly, and many pursued no definite course of instruction. Continued Education in evening schools and on the voluntary principle signally failed as a national system. And in the circumstances of the case, it was foredoomed to failure.

These sad truths might still, at the moment of writing, be expressed in the present tense; they are written in the past tense in anticipation of the revolution—it is nothing less—which the provisions for Continued Education in the Education Act will bring about. It is provided that boys and girls between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years of age shall attend Continuation School for 320 hours in each year, and that the schools shall meet at times between eight in the morning and seven in the evening.<sup>2</sup> Obligation is laid

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Departmental Committee*, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> The application of Continued Education to those between sixteen and eighteen is, however, postponed for seven years

upon local Education Authorities to establish these Continuation Schools and to provide in them free courses of instruction and physical training.<sup>1</sup>

It is hardly possible to exaggerate the significance of these provisions. In a few brief sentences they proclaim a new order of things in the life of the working boy, and, in effect, restore him to the lost position of a pupil. The incidental and contingent changes which they involve are hardly of less importance than the actual reforms which they introduce, and their reaction upon juvenile industry will scarcely be less influential than their reconstruction of education. Education is embedded in the working day, instead of being relegated to the close of it. Employers are obliged to recognize and to

from the "appointed day"; and, during the same period, a local Education Authority may require 280, instead of 320, hours a year of school attendance between fourteen and sixteen.

<sup>1</sup> 3 (1); 10 (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6); cp. 42 (2).

"Young persons" who are above fourteen on the day appointed for the Act to come into operation, and those who are, or up to the age of sixteen have been, undergoing efficient instruction, are exempted from the obligation to attend Continuation School. But a "young person" above fourteen on the "appointed day" may nevertheless, by personal written application to the local Education Authority, make himself liable for attendance at Continuation School [(10 (1), (2), (3)].

provide for the claim of education upon the boys whom they engage in their service. The episodes (as they have hitherto been) of school and work in the story of a boy's life are combined into unity. The boy on leaving the primary school behind him will no longer stray into an unmapped country, or wander without a guide. No boy will pass, as now thousands do, from care or ken. As the Departmental Committee on Education After the War put it, "Some handrail is required over the bridge which crosses the perilous waters of adolescence, and it is this which a sound system of Continuation Classes may help to provide." These are gains which are inherent in the new scheme of Continued Day Education itself, and will in their degree work for good in whatever way the scheme is carried into effect. But if Continued Education is to fulfil its promise, and especially if it is to fulfil the promise of solving some of the problems of boy-labour, it is necessary to consider its probable effect upon industrial conditions, and to define with some closeness the ideal relationship between general and vocational training in the scheme.

## II

The consensus of opinion on the part of the representative employers who gave evidence before the Departmental Committee on Education After the War was almost consistently in favour of such a scheme of Continued Education as the Education Act provides. Employers showed, the Committee found, a deepening sense of responsibility in the employment of juvenile labour, and a growing conviction of the value of technical and general education. "Nothing," they wrote, "has more impressed us throughout our investigation than the progress which has been made amongst employers in recent years towards sound ideals of working-class education."<sup>1</sup> Opposition came, however, from the cotton trade. Two witnesses before the Committee—Mr. T. D. Barlow and Mr. H. P. Greg—thought that part daytime classes up to the age of eighteen for workers in the cotton mills were impracticable. Great dislocation would be caused even if a system of relays were adopted; the continuous working of the mills would be interfered with, and,

<sup>1</sup> *Report*, p. 19.



besides, there was not "a sufficient supply of labour for such an experiment."<sup>1</sup>

In Parliament the Continuation School clauses of the Education Bill were strenuously opposed on behalf of the trade; and Sir Henry Hibbert proposed as an alternative a system of half-time between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Mr. Fisher, the Minister of Education, eventually met these objections with the concession that attendance at Continuation School between the ages of sixteen and eighteen should not become obligatory until the lapse of seven years from the time at which the Act comes into operation.

Opposition from the cotton trade was to be expected. For years it has obstinately withstood the attacks upon the half-time system under the age of fourteen; and at each raising of the partial exemption age the cry that the industry would thereby be mortally endangered has been heard. The half-time system has now been abandoned without a struggle, and has gone with none to mourn it; and those who have so often

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War*, vol. ii, Summaries of Evidence, pp. 20, 21, 22.

said that its abolition would dislocate the working of the mills can hardly wonder if their protestations that part-time education after the age of fourteen is impracticable are received with incredulity. It may well be true, however, that in work so purely automatic as that of the cotton operative the partial withdrawal of young workers will cause greater inconvenience than in more skilled employment, while, on the other hand, technical training is of no immediate practical service. But clearly in every occupation the obligation to allow the boy-workers to attend school will involve greater or less disturbance ; and the difficulty will vary in kind and degree in different occupations and in different firms.

Decision as to the number of weekly hours to be spent in schooling (which, however, is not to be less than eight), and the distribution of the hours, is left to local Education Authorities. The Departmental Committee on Education After the War suggest as the best arrangement two weekly attendances of four hours each. Educationally, this is manifestly more desirable than the distribution of schooling in shorter spells through the week. From the point of view of industrial

convenience it is no less advisable. The Education Act provides that a local Education Authority "may require that the employment of a Continuation Scholar should be suspended on a day when he attends school not only during the period for which he is required to attend school, but also for such specified part of the day, not exceeding two hours, as the Authority consider necessary in order to secure that he may be in a fit mental and bodily condition to receive full benefit from attendance at the school" (Sec. 9 (4)). It is a pity that this provision should not have been made absolute, and that it should remain so loosely defined; since it is, of course, obvious that, apart from preserving the pupil in a fit mental and bodily condition for education, he will in any case have to be released from work in time to enable him to prepare for school attendance and to reach the school. Unless, therefore, the attendances are concentrated in two periods at most, the inroad into the boy's working hours will be serious. Releasing the boy for an hour's schooling, the employer would be obliged to release him for at least another half-hour to reach school,

and for a portion of another hour to return to work. One hour's schooling would involve three hours' absence from work.

Difficulties more serious in their reaction upon juvenile work may be anticipated. The reduction of working hours through school attendance will probably necessitate in some cases an increase in the juvenile staff. But since it is only for eight hours a week that boys are required to be released from work, the hours of exemption will be too few—unless legislation further reduces working hours—to demand the employment of a second relay of boys. At the same time, it may be impossible in certain occupations and in certain firms, without bringing some process to a temporary standstill, to forgo the work of the boys. In large firms the difficulty could often be adjusted by the temporary removal of boys from less pressing tasks, or from processes which need not be continuous, to relieve those absent at school; and this might even have the incidental advantage of making work-training more general and of breaking down over-minute specialization. In this connection, too, arises the question of the possible effect of obligatory attendance at

Continuation School upon the rate of wages. Employers are, in effect, to be compelled to shorten the weekly term of work of the boys they employ by eight hours, or more. Probably in itself this would not tend to reduce wages. Since the scheme is to be universal, the availability of boy-labour is everywhere reduced by eight hours a week. Boys exempt from this limitation of service will not, eventually, be forthcoming: and wages will probably be steadied at their normal by this fact. But if, in certain cases, the staff of boys has to be increased in consequence of school attendance, sometimes the necessity, sometimes the plausibly pleaded necessity, of economy will tend to a lowering of the price paid for boy-labour. For some time after its inception the scheme will be harassed by administrative difficulties of this kind; and their complexity, and the minute differences between them, will make them hard to solve. They will be solved only, save by unsatisfactory compromise, in so far as the principle of the working boy as a learner is accepted with goodwill, and its embodiment deemed worthy of sacrifice and labour.



Difficulty and injustice will, it is to be feared, be caused during the years immediately following the inception of the Education Act by the fact that the provisions for Continued Education are not to have retrospective effect. It is provided that "the obligation to attend Continuation Schools under the Act shall not apply to any young person who is above the age of fourteen years on the appointed day," on the day, that is, on which the Act becomes operative, as decided by the Board of Education (10 (2) (1); (47 (3) ). It is true, indeed, that a boy over fourteen may, by personal application in writing to the local Education Authority, bring himself within the operation of the Act. But many boys will fail to do so, and many employers will discourage their doing so. Considerable numbers of boys already in employment will, therefore, be under no obligation to continue their education, and their employers under no obligation to give them facilities for doing so. Presumably after the inception of the new scheme of Day Continuation Classes, the evening classes will be discontinued. Boys over fourteen on the "appointed day," whose employers refuse to release them



in the day-time, will be bereft of education. They will at once be at a disadvantage in comparison with the younger boys who will begin to enter into the advantages of the new education. Nor is the injustice to these boys all. The proviso is calculated to intensify industrial and economic difficulty. It presents the employer for some years with a supply of boy-workers unhampered by the ties of school attendance. The exploiter of boy-labour may give preference, where it is possible to do so, to such school-exempted boys. The equality in the availability of boy-labour, restricted by the obligation to attend school, to which we looked to keep juvenile wages stable, will be broken at the outset; and the likelihood that the Continued Education requirements will reduce wages will be increased. The employer will be tempted to pay lower wages to boys whose service he is obliged to forgo for eight hours each week than to those whom he may employ uninterruptedly.

### III

The influence of Continued Education upon boy-labour will depend upon the aptness

with which it is related with the working life. The ideal is not merely that a boy should continue to go to school after he has entered upon work, but that learning and working should inter-act. If education be merely added to labour, it will not, though carried on during working hours, react for good upon the conditions and prospects of employment; and learning and working will remain episodes in the boy's life hardly more unified than they have been in the past. The system of Continued Education should grow from sympathetic co-operation between employers and Education Authorities; for if employers refuse facilities for practical training, or are indifferent to it, while the education in the schools is academic and aloof, the industrial position of the boy will remain, in spite of all that the schools can do for him, a position of exploitation.

This involves not only adjustment of method and curriculum, but, more deeply, a synthesis of ideals. Already, in discussion on Continued Education, appears a tendency to set the ideal of "culture" against the ideal of technical and vocational training. It is feared that the new Continued Education may itself

become an instrument of exploitation, and help to subserve the man to his trade; and it is contended that the training should be general rather than vocational. In this there appears to be some confusion of thought. Cultural and vocational training are not, or need not be, opposing ideals. In mental development—in education—the means of instruction, the subjects of study, are of less importance than the method and the spirit with which the instruction is given. Method and spirit being educationally sound, the mind of a boy is not less perfectly developed if he works on the technical theory of his trade than if he works on history, philosophy, or literature. On the other hand, studies which are unrelated with his daily work can neither brighten his intelligence in that upon which, being constantly engaged, his mind is habitually bent, nor make that daily work more fitting for an intelligent being. His education becomes a hobby; and the world which it opens to him a Utopia to which he escapes on occasion from the world of reality around him. The real dangers which threaten vocational training are a too early specialization, and a too specialized course of study.

A boy of fourteen, with the education which the elementary school at its best can give him, is not ripe for specialized, or for mainly specialized, study. Neither in general knowledge nor in mental development is he yet prepared for it; and the effect of attempting to apply it prematurely is not only to numb his intelligence, but to limit the technical training itself to the merest rudiments of "information." And again, the ideal of vocational training in the school is to broaden, not to narrow, the specialization of work: to add an intelligent grasp of principle to the practical skill won in the workshop, to give coherence and meaning to the severed processes of a trade by understanding of their relationship and of the science upon which they are based. In this sense, its aim is to give both a foundation and a finish to the manual training which the workshop, at best, can alone offer to the worker under the complex conditions of modern industry.

The Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War have sketched in their final Report a tentative scheme of Continuation Classes, which admirably illustrates the manner in which the

ideals of cultural and vocational training may be united. "Whilst one of the prime objects of the scheme," they write, "is to increase the industrial efficiency of the workman, the education of the future citizen is even more important. Consequently, the instruction provided must not be narrowly technical, but must develop the general powers of the mind." The curriculum, therefore, "should preserve a balance between the technical and the humanistic elements."

The four years' course, it is suggested, should be divided into two equal stages. The first stage, for pupils between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, will be general, though with some vocational bent. The second stage, for pupils between the ages of sixteen and eighteen, will be predominantly technical and vocational, though general education will be continued into it. In the first stage, the curriculum falls into four groups:—

1. English;
2. Mathematical;
3. Manual and Scientific;
4. Physical training.

English, which forms the basis of the curriculum, and is continued throughout the four years' course, aims at training in self-expression, encouraging of a love of reading, and a widening



of outlook. Subjects such as History and Geography will be brought into relationship with the pupil's vocational interests. In the Mathematical Group, Practical Mathematics and Practical Drawing take chief place for those engaged in industrial pursuits. Here, again, application will differ in accordance with occupation. The Manual and Scientific Group will aim at developing intelligence and "handiness" by the practice of manual work, and for boys in trades which need them, Mechanics and Physics will be added. Systematic physical training should, where possible, be associated with instruction in elementary Physiology and the Laws of Health.

At about the age of sixteen the boy, settled, it is presumed, in the work in which he means to continue, would enter the second and more entirely vocational course. For boys engaged upon the great industries of agriculture, engineering, building, mining, the textile trades, etc., there would be three alternative courses. A "Major Course," designed for the most promising students, who seem fitted to attain to higher positions, would give advanced technical instruction. For students



less promising and with lower vocational aspirations, a "Minor Course" would be provided, dealing with the operations of a single trade "such as pattern-making, moulding, fitting or smithing." For those engaged in industrial occupations requiring little or no technical training, there would be a further course. It would deal with the history of the trade and with the mechanical contrivances and inventions which are used in it. For those engaged in commercial and clerical occupations similar graded courses would be provided. Finally, to boys engaged upon occupations which require no vocational instruction courses of general education would be offered.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee's scheme, as firmly defined perhaps as any theoretical scheme can be, brings strongly into relief the limitations to vocational training in a large number of the occupations into which boys enter. While the scheme is dealing with skilled industries, such as the various engineering trades, or with commerce, there is little difficulty in sketching it. The Major and Minor Courses supply the needs. It is when it deals with

<sup>1</sup> *Report of Departmental Committee*, pp. 32 ff

classes of employment less skilled or more specialized than these that the scheme becomes ambiguous. What, if any, industrial training is proposed for the repetition worker, the machine-minder or the labourer? What has Continued Education to offer to the boy in a blind-alley? The third of the proposed industrial courses is designed "for those students who, though engaged in industrial work, do not require technical instruction of the type already described" in the Major and Minor Course. Textile workers are taken as example. The course offered to them "would include the history and structure of their industry. It would deal with the mechanical inventions which have transformed the handloom into the automatic power loom, and the old spinning-wheel into the complicated series of machines now used in the production of yarn; with the origin and character of the raw material—cotton, wool or silk—and the changes this undergoes in the various machines which gradually turn it into cloth; with the marketing of yarn and cloth and their export to different countries; and finally with the organization of the industry as a whole, with trade unions and

employers' associations, and with the relation of the industry to the State."

Interesting as such a course would doubtless be, the Committee, it is evident, find themselves obliged to capitulate to the difficulty of providing trade-training for such workers as are represented by the textile operatives, who, in respect of vocational education, are in much the same position as repetition workers in engineering. Not vocational training, but instruction *about* the vocation, is offered. As concerns boys in blind-alley occupations the capitulation is yet more complete. The Committee, after expressing the fond hope that "the present upheaval will result in the extinction of all or at any rate the great majority of the occupations in which these boys are now engaged," remark that "if these occupations are to be continued even temporarily, it will more than ever be desirable that the boys who are employed in them should get such compensation as continued education may be able to afford. The education would necessarily be of a general character, though no doubt a practical as well as a humanizing bias should be given to it. Some form of

handicraft—Woodwork, Metalwork or Gardening—will be essential, and to this should be added instruction in Calculations and Drawing, in English subjects, in Vocal Music (or some alternative) and, of course, in physical training.”

The delimitation of occupations according to their susceptibility to industrial training which is thus suggested may eventually have an influential effect upon choice of employment. As education becomes more highly valued, the inferiority of kinds of work to which it cannot be applied will be apparent, and employment will be valued according to the possibilities of training which it holds. But it is questionable if the completeness with which the Committee seem to surrender the hope of applying training to large classes of employment is a final necessity. Messrs. Fleming and Pearce in their book on *The Principles of Apprentice Training* show that training is more applicable to the mechanical processes of industry than is generally supposed. Such training is no doubt more a matter of practice, and more the acquisition of skill in the workshop, than a lesson to be learned in the school; but it would probably be

found possible, though difficult, to design trade courses for automatic workers. Most of the blind-alleys, of course, are quite unsusceptible to vocational training; but there are employments in which at present prospect is latent, but not necessarily wanting, and in which trade-education might discover and develop it. For errand-boys, for instance, in the shops of the providing trades courses might be arranged on the commodities with which their trade deals, so that if prospect is developed, as it well might be, they would be better equipped to take their place as salesmen.

In framing a national system of Continued Education, it needs to be remembered that voluntary initiative has already in some cases anticipated State action. Some large employers of labour have established Trade Schools for their apprentices in connection with their own Works. Messrs. Fleming and Pearce describe in detail the scheme established by the British Westinghouse Company. Classes in Mathematics, Mechanics, Elementary Science are directed in their application to trade work, but the method of instruction and the plan of work are based upon a liberal



conception of education; and a "general course" is designed "to increase the general knowledge of apprentices, and to give them a broad interest, not only in the operations of the trade in which they are most concerned, but in others." There are specialized trade courses for different classes of workers. The classes are held on the premises during work hours.<sup>1</sup>

This suggests the desirability of close co-operation in purely trade-training between employers and Education Authorities. A scheme on the scale of that of the British Westinghouse Company is, of course, possible only for large firms; but smaller firms in one locality might be grouped for such a system. The works classes, recognized, might relieve the Education Authority from the provision of expensive equipment: teachers would be at hand, and the education related far more intimately with work than would be possible if it were given in the school. The balance between cultural and vocational education might at the same time be maintained by continuing the former in

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Apprentice Training*, pp. 140 ff. Cp. Appendix I.



the schools. In any case it would be folly to neglect the opportunity which such voluntary trade teaching offers or to merge it, for the sake of uniformity, in an official system.

#### IV

The influence of the Continuation Schools is not bounded by the actual instruction given in them. They are to be more than schools. The Education Act gives to local Education Authorities, with the approval of the Board of Education, powers which will enable them to make the Continuation Schools centres of social life for their scholars. They may "make arrangements to supply or maintain or aid the supply or maintenance of" holiday camps, centres and equipment for physical training, playing fields, swimming baths, "and other facilities for social and physical training in the day or evening" (Sec. 17).

The ideal of these proposals is a high one. Its realization would plant the Continuation Schools system in the lives of the boys. The corporate life of the schools would develop.

The educational and recreative work would interact. More intimate knowledge of their pupils and more human sympathy between teachers and taught would be the result. But there is a danger to be foreseen and avoided. For years some of the finest and most fruitful social service has been devoted to the recreative education of boys. Practical and successful social workers have without stint spent their enthusiasm and sympathy in it. It would be deplorable if the national system of Continued Education were to find itself in competition or rivalry with this voluntary service, and if it failed, on the contrary, to enlist and co-operate with it. It is of the essence of this work that it should be voluntary. To introduce into it any kind of compulsion would be fatal. The voluntary principle gives to the work the peculiarly intimate influence which it exerts upon a boy. The lad who joins a club or scout troop places himself deliberately under the discipline of that organization. He accepts its rules, and submits himself to its officers. He is therefore in these associations most completely himself, and himself at his best. He allows himself to be moulded by the tradi-

tions, the spirit, as well as by the laws, of an organization with which he has of free will identified himself. His officers are voluntary too. It is, he recognizes, the sheer desire to do him good which has prompted them to give time and labour to the work. Hence, he turns to them naturally and trustfully in his difficulties; pays heed to their advice, if he does not always follow it, and is surrounded by an atmosphere of loyal friendliness. Any intrusion of "officialism" into this work would vitiate it. The attitude of the State towards these voluntary organizations must be one of recognition and encouragement, never one of intrusion. But, within these limits, there is much scope for co-operation. This will best be seen if we briefly consider some of the phases of this recreative work.

Lads' clubs have become strongly rooted institutions, especially in the northern cities. In size, organization, and methods they differ widely. The undenominational lads' club, of which there are several highly successful specimens in Manchester and Salford, have usually developed from small beginnings into considerable institutions, sometimes with ex-

tensive and well-equipped premises. Their work is mainly social and recreative. They provide a meeting-place for their members; and have rooms for reading and games, a library, a gymnasium, and even perhaps a swimming-bath. They have their sports clubs, and sometimes their own scout troop or brigade company. But their work is also educational. They have evening classes, lectures, and debating societies. Smaller clubs, working as far as their means allow on similar lines, are often attached to a church or chapel, and membership in them is confined to boys of their own denomination. In these clubs the dominant motive is often to retain lads in association with church, and to exercise over them a distinctively religious influence. Under a national system of Continued Education there are many ways in which these clubs could be brought into the scheme, without impairing their autonomy, or in any way changing their character. The educational classes, where such are held, might be arranged so as to supplement the instruction given in the day Continuation School, and to treat the subjects in a freer and more recreative way. It might be arranged

that reports on a boy's school progress should be sent to the secretary of his club, so that the club worker's knowledge of the boy might be made of use to the school. The physical training which, according to the scheme, should take an important place in the curriculum, might be carried on, or supplemented, in the club gymnasium, and perhaps instructors from the school might occasionally visit the clubs in the evenings. Rooms might be set apart for private study, in which the boys could do their home-work. In many such ways the life of the school might be related with the life of the club; and the schools would be humanized and enlivened by the contact.

The Boy Scout movement has taken a unique place among organizations for boys. It combines in a remarkable degree the best elements in earlier movements. Its success is due to its psychological soundness. It makes its appeal unerringly to what is most natural and constant in boyhood. In this respect it is almost an inspiration, for its founder lays no claim to the deliberate attempt to work it out on psychological principles. The boy's love of adventure, his

gregariousness, his alertness of observation, his passion for movement and variety, are engaged and used in a discipline that is not repressive but developing, and directed by principles which, as noble and ideal as can be, are yet within his comprehension and appeal to his best desires. He has enough corporate drill to teach him concerted action and prompt obedience: not so much as to deaden his individuality. His hobbies are regulated into pursuits. He learns to do useful things intelligently. The prestige of the Boy Scouts has been enormously increased by the service they have rendered during the war. In a system of Continued Education the movement must be taken account of. It is, in fact, from one point of view a system of education in citizenship which, without alteration, will supplement Continued Education. Every scout in the Scout Law learns the elements of good citizenship. The small technical training which he undergoes to qualify himself for the "Proficiency Badges" with which he seeks to decorate his arm is designed to teach him the value of craftsmanship. What he learns in the schools he can, to a degree, practise in his scouting



work. And an interchange of reports between schoolmaster and scoutmaster would be even more practically serviceable than between school and club. The scoutmaster could give valuable information to schoolmaster and Employment Supervisor, since the work of a scout brings out into relief a boy's aptitude and mental character better than any more formal test can do.

Among the extended powers conferred upon Education Authorities by the Education Act, the most important is that which enables medical inspection to be continued up to the age of eighteen. This power is of so great promise that the pity is that its exercise should be a permission only, and not an obligation. "As a result of the school medical service," write the Health of Munition Workers Committee, "much evidence is accumulating as to the effect of employment on children while at school, but no similar evidence is available as to the effects of employment after school age. Records, if carefully kept, should not only be of immediate value, as giving evidence of the presence of undue strain, but may prove of more permanent value as throwing light on the many difficult

problems arising out of the effects of industry on health.”<sup>1</sup>

It would render possible an approach to the ideal succinctly stated by Sir George Newman :—

“ That no child shall enter employment unsuited to his age or physical capacity; that as far as possible activities directed towards the amelioration of physical defects discovered at the leaving inspection, and subsequent After-Care, shall not cease, even though they may alter in kind, at the moment the child enters employment, and that industrial conditions should be supervised by the proper authorities, in relation to their influence upon the physique and health of the young worker.”<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Report on Juvenile Labour*, 1916, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Report of Chief Medical Officer to the Board of Education*, 1916, p. 119.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REFORM OF BOY-WORK

#### I

SOLUTION of the problems of boy-labour is a work of cumulative reform. Reform in education, primary and continued, and in the manner of choosing and entering employment must move in co-ordination with the reform of the boy's working world. There must be no break in the chain, and the links of it must be closely welded. In the past the problems of boy-work, so far as they have been attacked at all, have been attacked piece-meal. In such advance as has been made there has been no concerted action; and in consequence individual reforms have failed of full effect through isolation from correlative reforms essential to their success. This has arisen partly no doubt from indif-

ference, from our habitual acquiescence in makeshifts, and from our tendency to compromise and patchwork. But mainly it has arisen from imperfect realization of the ideal to be pursued. Advance has wavered because it lacked an objective.

The ideal becomes clear if we recall the root cause of the boy-labour problem. The cause is, we have seen, the conception of the boy as a worker—a convenience of industry and commerce—instead of as a learner, preparing for future competence and for future serviceableness. Boy-work is a means and not an end. Regarded as an end, it becomes, and is bound to become, the machinery for the making of the unfit, the unemployed and the unemployable. Regarded as a means, it becomes an education in citizenship and social duty. The ideal, therefore, is the complete recognition of the boy-worker as a learner and of his work as training, and careful embodiment of this principle in education, engagement and employment. Modern conditions of work, and the traditions which they have established, make approach to this ideal slow and difficult. It can be reached only by goodwill, and by the convic-

tion that the aim is worth the effort required to realize it; and ultimately the reform to give it effect must be brought about within the working world itself, and by those who, engaging juvenile labour, are responsible for its use. Legislation can compel the attendance of a boy at school, and can control the hours and conditions of his employment. But it is powerless to prescribe training in work, or to regularize entrance and engagement. It is powerless, that is, to do these things under modern conditions. A simpler industrial order made a Statute of Artificers, prescribing method of engagement and training, possible of application. Before its formal repeal, changing industrial conditions were making it a dead letter. Still less to-day would it be possible, even if it were desirable, to legislate for the complexities and varieties of the working world. And it is this complexity and variety, rather than neglect, which makes a boy's entrance upon work like entering for a lottery, and his prospect often the prize of chance. The regularizing of engagement, employment, promotion and training is a manifold process. Unity of principle there may be, and ought to be;

uniformity of method there cannot be; and the embodiment of the principle must, therefore, be a work of careful adjustment, which can be attempted only by those who are within the business to which the adjustment is to be made. The only compelling force that is available is a public opinion formed by the conscience of employers who realize their responsibility.

## II

Practically the exploitation of boy-labour comes about not only through deliberate repudiation of the principle of training, but, perhaps even more, through ignorance, or at least through unsystematized knowledge, of the natural and acquired qualities which are needed for efficiency in the different classes of employment. This ignorance, in turn, arises from the confusion which complex conditions have caused. While trades were practised in their entirety, and while their practice depended almost wholly upon craftsmanship, the lines of training and the kinds of aptitude demanded were clearly definable,



just as the position which could be finally reached was in sight from the outset. Minute specialization, process work, automatic devices which supersede or supplement handicraft, demand different kinds and grades of skill, and make it increasingly difficult to define it. These innovations in industrial method are being so constantly introduced, and pushed to finer points of achievement, that their invasion of handicraft has far outstripped, not only the attempt to adapt training to them, but also any systematic attempt to think out the needs of training and the possibilities of prospect which they bring. So much is this the case that training has often been simply abandoned, and prospect left doubtful. The employer has not taken pains to consider the aptitudes which will make a successful worker, or how in the work and in the school these qualities may be developed. In consequence, the efficiency of his work is hindered by the employment of inapt or untrained workmen. The waste caused by "misfits" is not only waste for the worker, but waste also for the employer. The boy, his parents, and the Juvenile Employment Bureau are from the same cause

taking a leap in the dark when they make choice of employment. The first step therefore in the reform of boy-work is investigation into, and clear statement of, required aptitude and acquired training for each kind of work. Without it, the best organized machinery for choice of work will lack precision, and Continued Education cannot be adapted to vocational training.

This systematization of knowledge must be worked out by each trade for itself. To this end, conferences should be arranged between Masters' Federations and Trade Unions with such expert evidence, scientific or educational, as they may see fit to take. The conferences should aim at defining the natural aptitudes required for different classes of work; at determining the extent to which, and the means by which, workers can be trained within the Works, and who is to be responsible for this training; and the best means of supplementing in the Continuation School the experimental training to be given in the workshop. These fundamental decisions taken, the conclusions should be made available to the Education Authorities and to the management of Advisory Bureaux. They

would guide the Education Authority in framing technical and vocational courses of study ; and they would supply the Supervisor of the Advisory Bureau with accurate data for determining the fittest boys to send to different classes of employment. The trade traditions fostered by such practical and representative conferences would probably pass more rapidly than the present chaos would lead one to expect into the common practice of industry, since the decisions would not alone appeal to a sense of duty towards the boy-workers, but would also indicate the most effective and least wasteful methods of employing labour. Such defined method of training would introduce system and unity into modes of engagement, and standardize promotion and prospect. But within this unity would be diversity of method. Each trade would have its own practice of recruitment and advancement, differing more or less widely from the practice of other trades. In some cases apprenticeship, differing little from its earlier form, might be retained or revived. In other cases, the looser plan of engaging boys as " learners " without binding, but that plan cleared of ambiguities and more

formally framed, might become the normal method. In any case, the gain would be the introduction of a system clearly understood, and adapted to the character and needs of a particular trade.

Conferences would yield results and advantages of a like kind in commercial employment, and in other such forms of probationary work. Here the position is different from that in the trades. In the trades confusion in entrance and training has come from the supersession of what was once an authoritative and general system. In the employment of boys in offices there has never been anything like system. It is yet to be made. Engagement, casual and to undefined ends, is the practice. But this arises from the failure to study and define aptitude, training and prospect. They will doubtless be more difficult to define in the work of commerce than in the work of manual trades, and conferences between representative employers and workers will perhaps be less easy to arrange. But the need is no less apparent.

Systematization of entrance and engagement, development of training and definition of prospect, are lines of reform ap-

plicable to all classes of probationary work. The way lies open, if there be the will and the energy to follow it. But at the distinctive blind-alley employments, this path of advance seems to be closed, and closed by the very nature of such occupations. If an employment be susceptible of training and prospect, it is not a blind-alley. Here reform appears to be baffled. Yet if this be the case it means the confession that the problem of boy-labour in its most crucial aspect is insoluble. Guided by the facts of such employment which we have already reviewed, it is necessary to ask if the position is really as hopeless as it appears, and to inquire what measures of alleviation, at least, can be taken.

We have seen that, while some of the blind-alley employments are in their nature incapable of being converted, through the development of training and prospect, into probationary work, others have been allowed to fall into a hopeless position through neglect to cultivate the opportunities they possess. The shop errand-boy, to revert to a familiar example, becomes a blind-alley worker through default to build a stairway for his ascent

in the trade he serves. In the nature of the case there is no barrier to his progressive training and advancement, nor is it hopeless to expect his training to be at least begun in the work he is doing. He handles the wares with which his shop deals. He has opportunity to learn their nature, their use, and their value. He becomes familiar with the practice of the business. His work might be made an apprenticeship. In fact, it is not so, because of the casual manner of his engagement, the absence of any tradition of training or promotion, and the fact that boys enter the work with no intention of making it a career. It is an artificial blind-alley, the product of neglect. Let prospect and training be developed in the retail shop trades, as they may be developed in the manual trades, let the trades be recruited from boys who look to graduating into the business, then the blind wall is broken down, and an avenue to settled adult work is thrown open.

Among the blind-alley employments which seem to be necessary, the most prominent is that of telegraph messengers. It is, as we have seen, a distinctive blind-alley, inas-



much as training for any future attainable position cannot be carried on in the progress of the messenger work. Promotion, if promotion there is, is movement out of the original work into work of another kind. The attempt of the Post Office to convert this blind-alley into probationary work has been seen to be a partial failure. At best, the Post Office has succeeded only in absorbing the messengers into some kind of postal service, although in most cases into work which offers an inferior prospect to the boys whom they recruit, and seek to recruit, as messengers. In the case of the postal telegraph messengers, as in that of the messengers even more precariously employed by cable companies and press-agencies, the dangers of the occupation should be frankly recognized and, if they cannot be removed, should as far as possible be avoided. The attempt to recruit the most promising boys by the offer of positions to which in the nature of the case few can possibly attain, should be abandoned. The work should be presented in its true nature as pure boy-work, lasting for a few years, and with the prospect of (mainly) unskilled employment as a continua-

tion of it. Recognized and used as temporary employment, messenger work would lose its danger. It will happen that the Juvenile Employment Bureaux will have among their applicants boys whose vocational bent is not developed, or who cannot immediately be launched upon the work that is most fitting for them. Such boys might without harm be employed upon messenger service pending a settlement of their career. The engagement of boys upon this service up to an age at which they would not be too old to enter upon probationary work might sometimes be an advantage. Carefully controlled, it might become a tonic to boys showing certain kinds of ill-health, or a discipline to boys whose temperament indicates the advisability of putting them on probation. The supervision secured by obligatory Continued Education, and the development of Juvenile Employment Bureaux, would make it possible to prevent a boy remaining in messenger work until disabled by it for regular employment.

To check and regulate the supply of candidates for the more hopeless and less useful forms of blind-alley employment is

probably as much as reform can expect to do, and that partially and indirectly. Gradually, a growing sense of choice and appreciation of training, fostered by the Continuation School and the Employment Bureau, will perhaps cut off the supply of candidates for such work, or largely reduce it. Such slender possibilities of promotion as the work holds will need to be developed as far as possible. In some cases where boys have been employed merely for display or advertisement, and without greatly serving the convenience of the employer, their employment will perhaps be discontinued. But the reaction of school training and supervision, of a new conception of the ends of boy-labour, upon the lucrative blind-alleys will be slow, and it will not begin to operate while the supply of candidates for employment is artificially inflated by the cessation of war-work; and it will of course be some years before the influence of school supervision after the age of beginning work will make itself felt.

Zeal in the closing of blind-alleys is chastened by a very formidable difficulty. We have seen that a boy's choice of employment is

often most narrowly limited. He may even be forced into a blind-alley because no opportunity of regular work, or of regular work that suits him, exists in the neighbourhood in which he lives. Thus if the blind-alleys were closed, numbers of boys in such localities would be actually unemployed. A demand for apprentices, for instance, on one side of London, however extensive it might be, would hardly offer additional opportunities to boys living at the other side, unless at the same time means were provided by which they could journey to the place of work without such expense that their wages would dwindle to vanishing-point. This difficulty, which is present in London and in other large cities, where industries are concentrated in certain districts, becomes the most pressing problem of boy-labour in places—seaside or other health resorts, country towns and villages—in which there are few industrial openings, save, in the towns, shopwork, and in the country, agriculture. To find employment a boy must leave home. But this is often impossible. He could not maintain himself on his wages. In the days of the older apprenticeship the difficulty was, of

course, solved. The apprentice lived under his master's roof, and the master was *in loco parentis*. If careers are to be opened to boys so situated to-day, the mobility of boy-labour must somehow be facilitated, and means devised, by the provision of hostels or a system of boarding-out, by which they can be maintained and kept under care during their early working years. Under present conditions, which allow a boy to pass at the age of fourteen from all educational care, such a scheme cannot be framed: under the continued educational supervision to be set up by the Education Act it would be possible. One of the objects of the Labour Exchanges in their inception was to give mobility to adult labour—to widen a man's choice of employment by putting him in possession of information concerning the demand for his labour in other parts of the country, and giving him the opportunity of responding to it. Similar information could be furnished by the Employment Exchanges about the demands for juvenile labour; the Employment Bureaux might undertake the transfer of boy-workers, and the Education Authorities might develop a system

of boarding out. Such a scheme would do something to equalize the opportunities of vocational choice, and to make it easier to fit a boy into the work for which he is most apt; and every advance in this direction would reduce the need which at present exists in some localities for blind-alley occupations to absorb the surplus of boys who, through lack of local industrial opening, are almost forced into them.

### III

Boy-work is unfairly exploited, not only by the use of boys for immediate convenience, but also by unhealthy or unsuitable conditions of employment, and especially by long, late, or irregular hours. Here reform is the work of legislation. The principle of regulating by law the work of children and "young persons" is acknowledged and established. But the principle has been applied partially, sporadically, and capriciously. The law has been invoked to correct glaring abuses, and has almost always been the response to agitation. In this or that employment, or



in this or that condition of employment, the abuse of juvenile labour has been brought to light. Children were cruelly exploited in the cotton mills, or boys employed for excessive hours in shops. After a longer or shorter conflict with vested interests, these abuses were partially corrected by legislation, but the principle of legislative protection was not evenly applied to all occupations. Outside the trades controlled by the Factory and Workshop Act, work in mines and work in shops, the work of boys over fourteen is, at the moment of writing, uncontrolled by law. Messengers, office-boys, van-boys (unless they are employed "about a shop") and many other boy-workers may legally be employed for as many hours as the employer chooses to exact and the boy is willing to submit to.

Partial and imperfect as the present law of boy-work is, however, its principle is clear. The young worker is to be protected from exploitation because, *on account of his youth*, he is peculiarly subject to injury through excessive or untimely hours. This injury may be precisely defined. It is personal, educational, and economic. Personally, long,

late, and especially irregular, hours of work are physically and morally injurious. They induce fatigue, with the serious dangers which it carries at the time when growth absorbs the reserves of strength. They tend to demoralize a boy and to make him a loafer in his spare time. He has too scanty and too indefinite a leisure. To what purpose is it for him to enter into any of the organizations designed to save his leisure from vacancy or abuse—to become a scout or join a brigade—when he does not know what time he can call his own? Almost inevitably, fagged and jaded, he spends his leisure in idleness or worse. He is robbed of the opportunity of continuing his education, or continuing it with regularity and therefore with profit, in the evening, even if he has the energy and ambition to desire it. And, entering upon a blind-alley occupation, the length and often lateness of his hours of work keep him a prisoner in it. If he would better his employment, he must first relinquish the work he is doing, and throw himself into unemployment. And since these injuries result from unregulated hours, and not as a rule from the nature of the work with which

the hours are occupied, it is wholly meaningless to control the hours of work, for instance, of a boy in a factory or workshop, while his hours of work in an office or about the streets are left unregulated.

It has already appeared in our survey of the boy's working world that, as a fact, the hours of work in unregulated or inadequately regulated occupations tend to excess. Boys in offices—especially in the offices of shipping merchants—were before the war kept at work on occasion until nine or ten at night, while their normal hours were undefined. Van-boys, errand-boys, messengers and pages worked for excessive hours and until late at night. These long and late hours could not be defended on any plea of business necessity. They were in most cases the result of sheer carelessness, to which the absence of legal regulation gave stimulus and occasion.

The movement for the shortening of hours for all classes of workers steadily prevails. Already, in some cases, the movement has outstripped the legislation which controls the working hours of juveniles. In engineering, for example, the "period of employment"

permitted by the Factory and Workshop Act to "young persons" exceeds the period of employment which trade-agreement has normally assigned to men. The Shops Act, with its seventy-four hour weekly limit of work, lags behind the most moderate demands for fuller leisure. In some cases, of course, without further legislation, the shortening of juvenile hours of work will be carried in these general movements; but it will be a sad comment on the nation's listlessness in the welfare of its boys and girls if they are delivered from the tyranny of long hours of work in some occupations only through the powerful agitation of organized labour, while in others they are left helpless at the mercy of exploitation.

The regulation of boys' working hours is necessary, further, in order that the Continued Education provided in the Education Act may be carried out with success and without being burdensome. The English Education Act, unlike the Scottish, makes no provision that, in cases where hours of work are legally restricted, the time released from work for school attendance should be reckoned in the permitted period of employment. There is

therefore no legal limitation of the hours over which work and education taken together may extend. In the regulated as well as in the unregulated employments, a boy may be required to work for extra hours in order to compensate for the hours released for schooling. The Departmental Committee on Education in Relation to Employment After the War say that it "was urged upon" them by many witnesses that Continued Education should be accompanied by statutory regulation of working hours—the limit most frequently suggested being forty-eight hours a week. In this they concur. "We are of opinion," they wrote, "that the retention of the present hours of labour for adolescents in many industries will militate against the success" of a scheme of Part-time Continuation Classes. Notwithstanding, they make no recommendation; and the Education Act leaves working hours untouched, save by laying obligation upon the employer to release his juvenile workers for school for eight hours a week.

Not only is partial legislation, controlling some occupations, and leaving many others untouched, obviously unfair and unreasonable,

but the embodiment of this legislation in separate statutes causes administrative difficulty. The time has come to co-ordinate the law of juvenile work in a single Act, and to extend it to cover equally every employment entered upon by boys and girls. The Report on Juvenile Employment During the War and After issued by the Ministry of Reconstruction advocated "an amendment of the Factory and Workshop Acts, which should (1) establish a normal working week for young persons not exceeding in any case 48 hours; and (2) extend the protection of the law to those classes of young persons who at present fall outside the scope of industrial regulation." "Such a reform," the Report continues, "would at once remove conditions highly deleterious to the health and *morale* of the rising generation and facilitate the absorption into industry of young persons who would otherwise be unemployed."<sup>1</sup> But, while the enactment of a defined weekly limit of employment in all occupations would be an important step in advance, experience of the ease with which the weekly limit of

<sup>1</sup> *Juvenile Employment During the War and After*, Ministry of Reconstruction, 1918, p. 61.



hours set by the Shops Act is transgressed or evaded suggests that daily limitation of working hours, on the model of the Factory and Workshop Act, would be more effective, as well as easier to administer. The enactment of an eight-hour working day (exclusive of an hour's meal-time) on five days in the week, and of a four-hour working day on one day in the week, would roughly synchronize with the agreed normal working week for adults in trades in which the shorter working week has been adopted, or will hereafter be adopted; would cause no greater inconvenience than is entailed in organization and more careful distribution of duties in commercial and other regular employment; would check the excessive hours worked in many of the blind-alley occupations; and would leave the boy-worker a reasonable and assured margin of leisure, and opportunity to continue his education with profit and without burden.

The initiation by the Ministry of Munitions during the War of schemes of Welfare Supervision for young workers indicates the lines on which the working conditions of boys might, apart from legislation, be spontaneously

bettered. The Memorandum issued by the Ministry of Munitions on the duties of Welfare Supervisors is remarkable as well for the sympathy and insight with which it appreciates the human problems of boy-work as for the suggestions it makes for their solution. The function of the Supervisor, widely considered, is to re-establish the human relationship between employer and employed which the enormous growth of modern industry has destroyed. "He is appointed by the firm, not as an Inspector for the management, nor as a mere friend for the boys, but as an important factor in the business who will represent a humanizing influence in the industrial economy." Knowing the conditions under which the boys work, appreciating the point of view of master as of boy, the Supervisor may bring about, unobtrusively and easily, small changes in the manner of employment which will make all the difference between content and discontent. Complaints and grievances may often be met and removed by the tact of a man whom the boys trust as their friend, and who can express and resolve their inarticulate dissatisfaction, while the Supervisor will be able also to trans-

late the vague goodwill of employers to do the right thing by their boys into definite accomplishment. The greatest good will come from the system—which is being largely adopted, especially in engineering—if this function of acting as intermediary between the boys and the management is made the main function of the Supervisor. The influence of the system will dwindle if he is regarded mainly either as an instructor in physical culture or as the organizer of recreation. Nor need the admirable idea of Welfare Supervision be realized only in concerns large enough to give scope for the appointment of a Supervisor devoting his whole time to this work. There is no reason why in every firm which employs boys one of the staff should not be given responsibility for their work. To him might be entrusted in the first place the task of engaging the boys and setting them to work, as well as, subsequently, concerning himself in their welfare and acting, as does the formally appointed Supervisor in larger concerns, as the human link between the boys and their employers.

## CONCLUSION

I CLOSED the first book which I wrote on this question of boy-work, nearly fourteen years ago, with a tribute to the character and personal resources of the average working boy.

“The boy from the best type of working-class home,” I wrote, “embodies, physically, mentally, and morally, what is soundest and sanest in national character; and it is this boy who, by the error of the first step, is preparing to recruit the ranks of the unemployable. . . . He is not the prodigious genius who covers an elementary school with glory by mounting thence to the University. He has nothing about him to arouse the picturesque pity which rags and dirt inspire. He comes from a good home. He has never known want, but he has never known waste. The fibres of his character are close-knit by association from his earliest years with steady work and simple living. Strong, merry, careless, he hides under his habitual mood of easy-going tolerance of his lot unspoiled resources of determination, endurance, loyalty, and common sense.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Problem of Boy-Work*, 1906.

To-day, those words need no proof. Their truth has been tested in the fire of war; and the half was not told. The dismal prophets who, looking back after their kind to the imagined glamour of a braver and stronger day, taught us that we were dropping into decadence, and that our youth were not of the fibre of their grandfathers, have fallen into chastened silence, or, like school-boys caught in a fault, seek to hide themselves in the crowd, shouting with the lustiest their pæans of praise over "our splendid lads." The war, which has taught us our deficiencies, has at the same time taught the richness of our living resources.

Those among us who are middle-aged or old, and upon whose habit-grooved way of life the cataclysm of the great war fell, know, or ought to know, that, as the active conflict was not for them, but for the young, so for the young, and not for them, is the harvest of victory. The youths who, dying, gave all for their country which had often been reckless of their boyhood and wasteful of its promise, died that the world might be a better world for those younger than themselves who should grow up to inherit it,

Like the martyrs, they "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off."

The end of the war finds the promises unfulfilled. Boys are still given over, as were these elder brothers of theirs, to industrial and commercial exploitation. The problem of their employment is intensified and extended. Their earlier education was impoverished by war-conditions—by the conversion of schools into hospitals, by scarcity of teachers, or by premature wage-earning. Their war-service was used as a temporary convenience; and thousands of them drop into unemployment and unfitness. The waste of boy-life and its promise bids fair to be added to the "wastage of war." The land which is to be made a fit habitation for heroes dallies with the emancipation of their sons.

The time has fully come to lift the life of boyhood for good and all out of the reach of exploitation. The complete solution of the problems connected with the training and employment of boys must indeed of necessity be gradually approached. It demands not only fundamental changes but, what is harder, the renunciation of bad



traditions. But if reform be undertaken with clear intention, with ordered advance and with careful correlation of means, long before the problem is finally solved its worst evils will have been conquered. Every step on the way will be worth taking, not only because it carries us so much nearer to the goal, but because in itself it wins a position of advantage. This, however, will only be true if the disconnected and incomplete methods of the past—a reform in education perhaps rendered relatively nugatory by failure to support it with answering reform in the working world—are exchanged for coherent and logical progress. It may, therefore, be useful briefly to summarize these converging lines of reform as they have been sketched in the preceding pages.

1. The Primary School, freed from the hindrance of child-labour and of the variable exemption age, should in curriculum and method of teaching be adapted, not only to careful instruction in elementary knowledge, but to the development, as far as their age allows, of the intelligence of the children. Since Continued Education in the daytime is compulsorily to follow the school-leaving

age, and the boy of fourteen is no longer to pass from educational supervision, elementary schooling will cease to be an episode in the boy's life; and may therefore with confidence lay foundations to be built upon in the Continuation School.

2. During the last two years of school-life, the boy should be led to consider the vocation on which he is to enter, and the teacher should carefully observe and note his aptitudes, in order that the report which he should later make to the Employment Supervisor may be accurate and practical.

3. Every local Education Authority should be required, and not merely permitted, to establish in its area a Juvenile Employment Bureau, and to appoint in charge of it a Supervisor to advise boys and girls in the choice of work, and in co-operation with officers appointed by the Board of Trade to launch them upon the working world, and, later, if need be, to help them in the difficulties of their early working years.

4. By conferences between employers and workers in industry and commerce, the needs and opportunities of work-training and of prospect should be thought out and defined,

*Relieve. Un-  
10 present  
Cochran*

so that the chaos of engagement, employment and promotion may give way to order.

5. Legislation should be extended and co-ordinated, and the working hours of boys and girls in every occupation should be legally defined and brought under control.

6. The aim of these reforms is the conservation in physical, mental, and moral well-being of the nation's youth, and the equipment of each, possessed of his distinctive resources of body, mind, and character, to discharge in freedom, happiness, and goodwill the personal service of citizenship for which these endowments fit him.



*Printed in Great Britain by*

UNWIN BROTHERS, LIMITED

WOKING AND LONDON











